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Origins of Expression: Principal Sources of Samuel Silas Curry's Theory of Expression.

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ORIGINS OF EXPRESSION: PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF
SAMUEL SILAS CURRY'S THEORY OF EXPRESSION.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1966
Speech

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ORIGINS OF EXPRESSION: PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF
SAMUEL SILAS CURRY'S THEORY OF EXPRESSION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

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by
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ABSTRACT

Although S. S. Curry restricted his theory of expression to a consideration of delivery alone, he denied any significant debt to traditional elocutionary theory. Despite this denial scholars have consistently described Curry's theory within a matrix of elocution. This study hypothesizes that this elocutionary matrix does not account for the more important tenets of Curry's theory. After examining all those sources to which Curry made reference in his published and unpublished writings, this investigation concludes that the most significant aspects of Curry's theory originate not in elocution but in nineteenth-century theories of education, philology, psychology, and aesthetics.

Among educational theorists, Curry was particularly attracted to Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, all principal figures in the naturalistic educational movement. From these theorists Curry borrowed much of his vocabulary as well as his conviction that any method for developing delivery should conform to the dictates of nature.

From philologists, particularly Wilhelm von Humboldt, Curry derived three beliefs: (1) that each separate linguistic culture required a unique mode of expression, (2) that each individual required a unique mode of expression, and (3) that

only spoken language could fully express both the individual and his culture.

Though Curry expressed a considerable interest in psychology, he restricted his reading largely to speculative psychologists like S. T. Coleridge, Herbert Spencer, Alexander Bain, and Hermann Lotze. Adapting to their descriptions of intellect, volition, and emotion, Curry designed a series of "psychic exercises" to train the mind of the speaker, the reader, or the actor.

From the aestheticians of the expressive movement Curry derived his understanding of the elements of oral expression--the speaker or reader or actor, the audience, the means of expression, and the message. Like these aestheticians Curry believed that the speaker was the most important element involved in expression.

Though Curry believed oral expression required training of the mental faculties, he also recognized that abnormal speaking habits necessitated the training of the voice and body. Rejecting the elocutionary theories of Sheridan, Walker, Austin, and Rush, Curry turned to L. B. Monroe, Alexander Melville Bell, and Steele MacKaye for methods for the development of voice and body. Consequently, Curry incorporated into his theory a series of "technical exercises" which he claimed would overcome objectionable habits and return both voice and body to their natural responsiveness to mental activity.

In short, Curry's theory represents a coalescence of ideas derived mainly from education, philology, psychology, and aesthetics. Traditional elocution, on the other hand, operates only peripherally in Curry's theory.

INTRODUCTION

In 1891, after forty-four years of studying, teaching, lecturing, and administrating at his own private school of speech, Samuel Silas Curry published his first textbook, The Province of Expression: A Search for Principles Underlying Adequate Methods of Developing Dramatic and Oratoric Delivery. The theory which Curry enunciated in The Province of Expression and the twelve other textbooks which followed it, has played a significant role in the course of speech education in the twentieth century. According to Don Geiger, "today, we honor Curry, as probably the outstanding interpretation theorist in the early part of our century."¹

Recognition of Curry's importance in the history of modern speech education seems fairly well established. His name frequently appears in History of Speech Education in America. In her essay on "The Elocutionary Movement and Its Chief Figures,"² Mary Margaret Robb devotes more space to

¹Don Geiger, "Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of Literature," The Speech Teacher, XI (September, 1962), 203.

²History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), pp. 178-201.

Curry than to any other figure, and Edyth Renshaw includes Curry's School of Expression in her essay, "Five Private Schools of Speech."³

This recognition of Curry's importance suggests that a detailed discussion of Curry's ideas would be of value to students of contemporary oral communication. Although a number of theses and dissertations treat selected aspects of Curry's theory of oral expression, no study to date treats Curry's complete theory, and no study attempts to describe the process by which Curry arrived at that theory.

I. Purposes

This study has three purposes. First, the study identifies those sources which had a significant influence on Curry's theory of oral expression. Whenever possible, the study also accounts for Curry's familiarity with the source and shows specifically the influence of each source upon Curry's theory. Second, this study explicates Curry's theory by describing that theory as a coalescence of ideas taken from a number of disciplines and tailored to the particular needs of the oral communicator. Third, this study traces the lines of demarcation between Curry's theory and the theories of his predecessors in the elocutionary movement.

II. Sources

The most important sources of Curry's ideas are the

³Ibid., pp. 301-325.

thirteen textbooks he published from 1891 to 1918.⁴ A discussion of the relative importance of these texts will be found in the first chapter of this study.

In addition to these books Curry also published over 125 essays and book reviews in Expression: A Quarterly Review of Art, a magazine he founded and edited from 1895 to 1900. His essays also appeared in Werner's Magazine, Emerson College Magazine and The Journal of Expression, the latter being a revival of Curry's own Expression magazine.

Furthermore, Curry's extant unpublished papers are housed in the Delsarte Collection of the Department of Archives, Louisiana State University Library. Curry's papers include lecture notes and syllabi for courses taught at The School of Expression, personal letters, outlines and drafts of uncompleted essays, and the uncompleted manuscript of the book on which Curry was working at the time of his death. These papers and particularly the book manuscript are valuable as they represent the only detailed discussions of bodily movement penned by Curry.

While this investigator has not consciously adopted the interpretations of any of the commentaries on and criticisms of Curry's theory, several of these studies have helped to clarify

⁴Curry also edited Classic Selections from the Best Authors; Adapted to the Study of Vocal Expression (Boston: The Expression Co., 1888). This anthology contains no discussion of Curry's ideas on vocal expression.

particular points in Curry's theory and to suggest lines for further investigation.

Among the published discussions of Curry and his work this investigation is especially indebted to Mary Margaret Robb's "The Elocutionary Movement and Its Chief Figures,"⁵ Edyth Renshaw's "Five Private Schools of Speech,"⁶ Nathan Haskell Dole's biographical "Foreword" to Poems by Samuel Silas Curry,⁷ and Eliza Josephine Harwood's How We Train the Body.⁸

While a complete list of the unpublished discussions of Curry appears in the bibliography, this study benefits markedly from two previous investigations of Curry's ideas. These investigations are Edyth Renshaw's dissertation, "Three Schools of Speech,"⁹ and Oclo Miller's thesis, "The Psychology of Dr. S. S. Curry."¹⁰

⁵Robb, pp. 178-201. ⁶Renshaw, pp. 301-325.

⁷Samuel Silas Curry, Poems by Samuel Silas Curry, Ph.D., Litt.D., ed., with a foreword by Nathan Haskell Dole (Boston: Expression Co., 1922).

⁸Eliza Josephine Harwood, How We Train the Body: The Mechanics of Pantomime Technique (Boston: Walter H. Baker Co., 1933).

⁹Edyth Renshaw, "Three Schools of Speech: The Emerson College of Oratory; The School of Expression; and The Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950).

¹⁰M. Oclo Miller, "The Psychology of Dr. S. S. Curry as Revealed by His Attitude Toward the Mind-Body Problem" (unpublished Master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1929).

Finally, this study utilizes those books and essays which influenced Curry's thought. In most instances, this investigation concentrates upon editions published prior to 1891, when Curry issued his first textbook. Later editions are used only when Curry's later texts reflect their influence.

III. Limitations

Because this study concentrates upon Curry's theory of oral expression and the sources which influenced that theory, no attempt is made to describe Curry's influence on the theorists who followed him. Furthermore, this investigation does not discuss Curry's School of Expression, where Curry's theory of expression received practical application. Finally, no attempt is made to describe Curry's fellow expressionists within the elocutionary movement except to show probable lines of influence upon Curry's theory.

IV. Organization

After the initial chapter, which discusses the pertinent facts of Curry's biography and his published works, the five chapters which follow concentrate on the sources which influenced Curry's ideas. These five chapters move from sources which influenced Curry's general overview of expression to those sources which influenced specific ideas within Curry's theory. Thus, Chapter II treats the sources of Curry's educational

philosophy. Chapter III is devoted to sources which influenced Curry's ideas on the nature of language, the tool of the communicator. The remaining three chapters consider sources which influenced Curry's specific method for developing the power of expression in his students. Chapter IV concentrates on the contributions of psychology to Curry's exercises for developing the mental powers of the student. Chapter V traces the influence of aestheticians on Curry's theory and his exercises, and Chapter VI presents Curry's exercises for developing technical skill by relating those exercises to the elocutionary movement. A final chapter summarizes both Curry's debt to other disciplines and his theory of oral expression.

CHAPTER I

S. S. CURRY: LIFE AND WORKS

While this study of Curry's ideas is not biographical in nature, nonetheless, some of the facts of Curry's life help to explain the myriad influences reflected in his theory of vocal expression. The first section of this chapter presents those aspects of Curry's life which shed light on his theory of vocal expression. The second section contains a brief description of Curry's books and magazine which develop this theory.

I. Biography

Curry was born in eastern Tennessee, November 23, 1847, the son of a farmer.¹ Curry's biographer, Nathan Haskell Dole, has recorded what few facts are known about the expressionist's life in Tennessee. Determined to become a Methodist minister, Curry entered East Tennessee Wesleyan University (later renamed Grant University) and graduated with honors in 1872.²

¹"Curry, Samuel Silas," Who's Who in America: A Biographical Dictionary of Living Men and Women of the United States, ed. John W. Leonard (Chicago: A. N. Marquis and Co., 1899), I (1899-1900), 167.

²Nathan Haskell Dole, "Foreword," in Samuel Silas Curry, Poems by Samuel Silas Curry, Ph.D., Litt.D., ed., with a foreword by Nathan Haskell Dole (Boston: Expression Co., 1922), p. 8.

That same year, Curry travelled to Boston, Massachusetts, matriculating at Boston University. It was in Boston that Curry's intellectual development began in earnest, and the role of the Bostonian atmosphere in that development must have been significant. As the intellectual and cultural center for America, Boston's star had already begun to set by 1870. Still, "to the West, Boston represented civilization in its highest form."³

The allure of Boston for Curry undoubtedly was strong. Twelve years before his arrival there, another young man, William Dean Howells, had been drawn from the same area of the country as Curry to "the Athens of America," and according to one historian, where Howells had lived, "Boston was a sort of holy city":

The people had largely come from New England, and those who cared for letters regarded Boston as many of the Bostonians regarded London. It was the hub of the universe, as Oliver Wendell Holmes had said, and the intellectual world revolved about it.⁴

Phillips Brooks once remarked to Curry's students:

There are many things which tend to draw students to Boston as the most favorable place for study. For the earnest student, especially when he is from a remote part of the country, as is the case with most of you, there is something sacred in the associations of her historical localities, her old buildings, her public

³Carroll Young Rich, "Boston as a Literary Center in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Reality and Symbol" (unpublished Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1957), p. 77.

⁴Van Wyck Brooks, New England: Indian Summer, 1865-1915 (n.p.: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1940), p. 1.

library, her Lowell lectures, and her various educational institutions.⁵

Apparently, Curry himself was even more impressed by Boston's greatest citizens than by the city itself:

Boston has seen many unique figures upon her streets. Who has not seen Dr. Holmes walking across Boston Common, or standing and looking into a shop window with all the interest of a boy? Who has not felt a thrill as he saw the towering form of Phillips Brooks, looming high above his fellow-men with his head exalted, moving along with that steady, strong, earnest walk so characteristic of him? Who does not remember the stately, dignified James T. Fields, with his cloak, long gray beard and hair, walking along Tremont Street? Whose heart is not moved at the remembrance of the noble bearing, the smooth-shaven Roman face, and broad-brimmed hat of Wendell Phillips? And what a picture comes up to my mind of the last time I saw Emerson walking along Beacon Street, as in a dream, looking neither to the right nor the left! There, too, I see again the kindly, hesitating step of Whittier on Mt. Vernon. Who can forget the erect, serious bearing of the greatest American comedian, William Warren?⁶

Two predominant characteristics of Boston in the 70's were her scorn for American ideas and traditions and her passionate emulation of things European. The first trait was manifest in the reaction of Boston to the presence of Mark Twain. In Boston Twain was advised by a society matron "to refine himself, his works; always to climb; never to affiliate with

⁵Phillips Brooks, "Address by the Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D., on Expression," Expression: A Quarterly Review of Art, I (December, 1895), 72.

⁶[Curry], "Wyzeman Marshall," Expression, II (March, 1897), 297.

inferiors."⁷ In the eyes of Bostonian society Twain was "still a man untrained and unpolished; the customs of the frontier still held him fast."⁸

Van Wyck Brooks has commented upon the second characteristic of Boston, her emulation of European ideas, as follows:

"Boston is very well up in all things European," Henry Adams noted in 1873, "but it is no place for American news"; and, as the interest in things American rapidly dropped away, the relish for the old world grew apace. The return of the colonial feeling was a part of this.⁹

Either Curry brought similar prejudices with him, or he adopted the Bostonian point of view with few reservations. As later chapters in this study demonstrate, Curry's ideas on vocal expression derived almost exclusively from European sources. Curry's knowledge of philology was squarely based on Germanic sources, for his philosophy of education he turned to the Germans, the Swiss, and the French, his understanding of psychology depended largely on the writings of Englishmen like Coleridge, Bain, and Spencer, and his aesthetic philosophy reflects the influence of Germany, England and France. In elocution, he praised the American, Monroe, but borrowed few of his ideas and bitterly attacked Americans like Rush, Murdoch, and

⁷Lillian Aldrich, Crowding Memories, quoted in Rich, p. 79.

⁸Ibid. ⁹Van Wyck Brooks, p. 146.

Russell, reserving his praise for the Italian Lamperti and Englishmen such as Melville Bell, Behnke, and Brown. Even Curry's mentor, Steele MacKaye, claimed to be the disseminator of a French tradition of bodily training, or so Curry viewed him.¹⁰

But Boston influenced Curry with more than atmosphere. Her public lectures and her universities eventually influenced Curry's choice of career. Curry had come to Boston intending to enter the ministry. For this reason he began theological studies at Boston University and received the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1875.¹¹

Three events occurred in the 70's which were eventually to terminate Curry's theological bent. The first of these was a lecture given at Boston University by Steele MacKaye in 1873. Though a theological student at the time, Curry happened to be among those present. MacKaye's lecture on Delsartism must have affected the young man deeply for years later Curry wrote:

About twelve years ago I attended a lecture delivered in Music Hall, Boston, on the subject of expression. The word itself to me, at that time, meant little, and I attended the lecture chiefly as a matter of curiosity. But on that evening I heard such marvelous principles expounded, and saw such an exhibition of the control of being over body, that it came upon me as a revelation

¹⁰Curry, The Province of Expression: A Search for Principles Underlying Adequate Methods of Developing Dramatic and Oratoric Delivery (Boston: Expression Co., 1891), p. 337. Hereafter cited as Province.

¹¹Dole, p. 8.

and started me in a course of investigation from which I have scarcely deviated since.¹²

The next two events which influenced Curry's choice of career were closely connected. Indeed, there was probably a causal relationship between them. According to Curry, he first began to consider delivery seriously when he experienced a "failure in the use of my voice."¹³ Dole fixed the date of this failure as occurring around 1875 and then quoted Curry as follows:

One Sunday morning I stood before an audience in the middle of an address, unable to speak a word. The horror of those moments has never been blotted from my memory. The failure was a climax of several years of misuse of my voice, though during that time I had sought help from every available source. I determined to search still more diligently to find the causes of my condition.¹⁴

As a result of this experience, Curry turned to a private instructor in elocution. His first lessons were taken under Stacey Baxter, but Curry was not impressed. While he admired Baxter's appeal to "instinct," Curry found little help from this teacher. "If he could have co-ordinated this method of awakening instinct with an awakening of a direct understanding of the man's needs and the cause of his faults, to my mind his

¹²Curry, "Delsarte and MacKaye," The Voice, VII (March, 1885), 42. Curry also heard a lecture by the elocutionist, Alexander Graham Bell. It apparently had much the same effect upon Curry. See p. 212 of this study.

¹³[Curry], "Conference on Vocal Training and Expression," Expression, II (September, 1896), 228.

¹⁴Dole, p. 8.

work would have been more effective."¹⁵

In October, 1876, after his work under Baxter, Curry took the third and final step away from theology; he enrolled in Lewis B. Monroe's School of Oratory. So profound was the influence of Monroe's school on Curry's mind that it warrants special attention. Though organized and administered by Monroe, the School of Oratory was a part of Boston University from 1872 until its closing in 1879.¹⁶ The school must have been an excellent one for its student body contained an impressive number of men and women who would later become leaders in the field of elocution. Among others, Curry's fellow students included Charles Wesley Emerson, Anna Baright (later to become Curry's wife), Leland Powers, Elizabeth Harwood, Moses True Brown, Edward N. Kirby, Franklin Sargent, Mary A. Currier, and Robert Raymond.¹⁷

Nor was elocution the only concern of Monroe's school. As a part of Boston University, Monroe's school could draw freely on the talents of the whole faculty. Monroe was apparently a firm believer in a liberal education. According to the Boston

¹⁵[Curry], "My First Lesson in Elocution," Expression, III (September, 1897), 393.

¹⁶Edyth Renshaw, "Five Private Schools of Speech," History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 302.

¹⁷Ibid.

University Yearbook, the school was organized to meet "the urgent and growing demand for liberally educated men and women possessed of those special qualifications which would fit them for professorships of Oratory in the colleges, professional schools, and high schools of the land."¹⁸

Consequently, Monroe included on his teaching staff in 1876-77 not only J. W. Churchill, Graham Bell and George L. Osgood in elocution and oratory, but also Robert R. Raymond and Henry N. Hudson, who taught Shakespeare, as well as James T. Fields, who lectured on English literature.¹⁹ These last two men were distinguished figures in the field of literature and belles-lettres. Hudson²⁰ published several works of literary criticism, and Fields was co-editor with Howells of The Atlantic Monthly.²¹

To receive the Diploma of Graduation from the School of Oratory, Curry, like all students, was required to pursue a two-year course of study which included the following subjects: Monroe's courses in Aesthetics of the Voice and Oratorical and

¹⁸Boston University Yearbook, I (Boston: H. O. Houghton and Co., 1874), 115.

¹⁹Ibid., IV (1877), 109.

²⁰Curry was to rely heavily on Hudson for the concept of "Originality" which he presented in Imagination and Dramatic Instinct: Some Practical Steps for Their Development (Boston: The Expression Co., 1896), pp. 350-53. Hereafter cited as Imagination.

²¹Rich, p. 78.

Dramatic Action; J. Wesley Churchill's Rhetoric, Expressive Reading, and Lecture and Sermon Delivery; A. Graham Bell's Culture of the Speaking Voice, Mechanism of Speech, "Visible Speech," and Methods of Instructing Deaf Mutes in Articulation; Henry N. Hudson's Shakespeare, Critical Introduction to the Study, and Class Readings; Robert R. Raymond's Delineation of Shakespearean Characters; George L. Osgood's Vocalization as Applied to Oratory; and finally James T. Field's Lectures on English Literature.²²

The catalogue for 1878, the year of Curry's graduation lists no changes in the requirements for graduation, but some course changes were made. Henry N. Hudson's course on Shakespeare was expanded to include Shakespeare and Standard English Authors, Churchill's course on Sermon Delivery now included Bible Reading, and James Steele MacKaye joined the staff as "Lecturer on Aesthetics and Dramatic Art."²³

Though Curry graduated in 1878, his name appears again on the class rolls in 1879 along with five other students in the "Advanced Class."²⁴ That same year the staff was expanded to include James W. Bashford who taught Language and Rhetoric.²⁵

The next few years must have been among the busiest in Curry's life. He received his diploma from the School of Oratory in May of 1878.²⁶ Since Curry received his Ph.D. in 1880,²⁷ he

²²Boston University Yearbook, IV (1877), 109.

²³Ibid., V (1878), 112. ²⁴Ibid., VI (1879), 111.

²⁵Ibid. ²⁶Ibid., V (1878), 115. ²⁷Dole, p. 9.

must have been working toward that degree no later than the fall of 1878, as the Ph.D. at Boston University required a minimum of two years of advanced study. To obtain the degree, Curry was obliged to take courses "in Philosophy and one or more of the following departments,--Philology, History, Literature, Mathematics, Natural Science, or the Fine Arts--and pass satisfactory examinations thereon."²⁸

Only the School of All Sciences offered the doctorate in philosophy. At that school, all philosophy courses were taught by Borden T. Brown.²⁹ As a doctoral candidate, Curry would have chosen among the following: Recent English Empiricism, Ethical Philosophy, Metaphysics, Logic and the Theory of Knowledge, History of Philosophy, and Aesthetics.³⁰

It seems likely that Curry would also have chosen courses in literature as his dissertation was entitled "A Review of Wordsworth's Excursion."³¹ Only two teachers of literature were on the School of All Sciences faculty, Truman H. Kimpton and Henry N. Hudson, so Curry probably took courses from one or both

²⁸Boston University Yearbook, VII (1880), 145.

²⁹Ibid., p. 135.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 140-41. The Boston University Office of the Registrar releases no information regarding individual students without the express permission of the student or his family. Consequently, the Boston University Yearbook is the best generally available source for information on Curry's career at the School of All Sciences.

³¹Dole, p. 16.

of these men.

Meanwhile, the death of Monroe in 1879 brought to an end the School of Oratory. However, Curry was asked to join the faculty of the School of All Sciences where he taught Elocution and Oratory.³²

In addition to studying and teaching at the University, Curry was also taking lessons with private teachers of elocution. Only a few of these teachers are known from passing comments Curry made in his books and magazine. In the summer of 1876 he travelled to Washington, D. C., to study under Graham Bell's father, Alexander Melville Bell.³³ In 1880 Curry earned a diploma from Dr. Charles-Alexander Guilmotte's School of Vocal Physiology,³⁴ and the same year he studied under Wyzeman Marshall.³⁵

Since Curry shared with his adopted city a keen interest in European ideas, as noted above, it is not surprising to find that he made two trips to Europe in 1880 and 1882. On the first of these trips he studied under Emile Behnke and Lennox Brown in London.³⁶ During the same trip he studied for a while in Paris.

³²~~Curry, Alexander Melville Bell: Some Memories with~~
³²Boston University Yearbook, VI (1880), 141.

³³Curry, Alexander Melville Bell: Some Memories with
¹⁹Fragments from a Pupil's Note-Book (Boston: School of Expression,
 1906), p. 18.

³⁴Dole, p. 9.

³⁵[Curry], "Wyzeman Marshall," Expression, II (March, 1897), 298.

³⁶Dole, p. 9.

There he investigated the "méthode quelque peu excentrique" taught by Delsarte's French disciples,³⁷ the same method which he had heard expounded by MacKaye at Boston University. While in Paris he also studied the "imitative method"³⁸ used at the School of Declamation, then under the direction of the great French actor, François Regnier.³⁹ During Curry's second trip to Europe in 1882, he revisited the School of Declamation⁴⁰ and then moved on to Milan, Italy, where he "studied for a time under the celebrated maestro, Francesco Lamperti."⁴¹

In 1883, after returning to America, Curry began taking private lessons from Steele MacKaye in New York,⁴² but he was also active in Boston. He continued on the faculty at Boston

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸See the chapter on elocution in this study, pp. 182-87.

³⁹Province, p. 302.

⁴⁰Whatever charm the School of Declamation had had for Curry in 1880 apparently vanished on his second visit. Later he wrote: "In a school supported by the state, and having such teachers, where only about twenty students each year are chosen from over two hundred applicants, even with bad methods, wonderful results ought to follow.

"But, when I visited the school the second time, I found some of the same students still working in the classroom. There is simply an endeavor to learn and to copy what the old actors did." (Province, pp. 302-03.)

⁴¹Dole, p. 9.

⁴²Letter from Helen Ular, Private Secretary to Steele MacKaye, New York, Oct. 6, 1883, in Delsarte Collection, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University Library.

University, a position he held until 1888,⁴³ and at the same time, he began to hold private classes outside the University. In 1883 he married Anna Baright who had organized her own school, The School of Elocution and Expression. Together, they operated this school under a new and shorter name, The School of Expression.⁴⁴

There is no record of any further studies on Curry's part after his lessons under MacKaye in New York. Early in the 1880's Curry had begun "writing a small pamphlet as a general definition" of his theory of vocal expression.⁴⁵ Curry did not publish the pamphlet, as his own experience at The School of Expression convinced him that "it seemed so inadequate to meet the great need."⁴⁶

By 1891, however, Curry was ready to present a detailed description of his theory of vocal expression. This book, entitled The Province of Expression, Curry published himself. Within five years, Curry had published two further explanations of his theory, Lessons in Vocal Expression (1895) and Imagination and Dramatic Instinct (1896). Had he written nothing else, these books alone would have established his reputation as a leader in the field of oral expression.

For the purposes of this study, the most important events of Curry's life were over by 1896. By that time his ideas on

⁴³Edyth Renshaw, "Five Private Schools of Speech," History of Speech Education in America, p. 306.

⁴⁴Ibid. ⁴⁵Province, p. v. ⁴⁶Ibid., p. vi.

vocal expression were crystallized, and though later books present more detailed explanations of these ideas, there is no indication of any fundamental change in Curry's beliefs. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Curry's activities as a teacher extended far beyond the bounds of The School of Expression. From 1891 to 1894 he was on the faculty at Harvard University and from 1891 to 1902 he also taught at Yale Divinity School. From 1896 to 1902 he conducted classes at Harvard Divinity School. In the 1890's and the early years of the twentieth century, Curry conducted special summer sessions of The School of Expression from Nantucket Island to Monteagle, Tennessee. He also lectured during summers at the University of Washington, the University of Minnesota, the Teachers College of Columbia University, and the University of Chicago. For the last three years of his life, from 1919 to 1921, Curry taught public speaking and oral interpretation at Union Theological Seminary in New York.⁴⁷

II. Books and Magazine

Curry's fourteen published books, all but one issued by his own publishing house, The Expression Company, appeared between 1888 and 1918. Had he lived to complete it, Curry planned to publish a fifteenth work to be entitled "Harmonic Gymnastics, Simple and Complex Expressions--Stage Business."⁴⁸

⁴⁷Dole, pp. 11-12. ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 11.

Curry's first book, Classic Selections from the Best Authors (1888),⁴⁹ contains no discussions of his ideas on vocal expression, but is rather an anthology of readings for classes in elocution.

- A. The Province of Expression: A Search for Principles Underlying Adequate Methods of Developing Dramatic and Oratoric Delivery. Boston: Expression Company, 1891, Pp. xv+461. Hereafter referred to as Province.

Unique among Curry's textbooks, his second book, Province, engages in a purely speculative discussion of the author's philosophy of vocal expression. This work seems to have four aims. These are: (1) to define "expression" and show its relationship to other forms of art, (2) to present a method for developing vocal expression based upon nature, (3) to distinguish expression from other philosophies of delivery, and (4) to establish expression as a respectable educational discipline. To meet these aims, the textbook contains four sections or units: "The Problem," "Search for Method," "Tradition," and "Application."

Province is among Curry's most famous publications. By 1932, the last year of its publication, it was in its nineteenth edition.

- B. Lessons in Vocal Expression; Course I: Processes of Thinking in the Modulation of the Voice. Boston: The Expression Company, 1895. Pp. iv+316. Hereafter referred to as Lessons.

This book represents Curry's first attempt at specific

⁴⁹Curry (ed.), Classic Selections from the Best Authors: Adapted to the Study of Vocal Expression (Boston: The Expression Co., 1888).

application of the philosophy of oral expression he had presented in Province. "Expression implies cause, means, and effect," Curry stated in the introduction. "The cause is in the mind, the means are the voice and the body."⁵⁰ As the book was intended for the first course in vocal expression, Curry's principal concern was to stimulate the student's mind. Curry restricted Lessons, however, to the development only of the conscious mental faculties, intellect and volition. Curry began with a discussion of the sequence of individual ideas in the mind, presented exercises designed to sharpen the conception of single ideas, and called the student's attention to the vocal results produced by clear, vivid, mental conceptions.

In the second unit Curry moved from individual ideas to "method" or the logical relationships among ideas. As in the first unit Curry began with a discussion of mental activity, in this case how the ideas were related in literature, and then he moved on to a discussion of the vocal results of full mental awareness of such logical relationships.

In the final unit, "Modes of Development," Curry showed how all the different forms of vocal expression (conversation, extemporaneous speaking, discussion, debate, and recitation) served to develop control over the mind.

⁵⁰Curry, Lessons in Vocal Expression; Course I: Processes of Thinking in the Modulation of the Voice (Boston: The Expression Co., 1895), p. 1. Hereafter cited as Lessons.

Lessons is among the most popular books that Curry wrote. It first appeared in 1895, and by 1923 twenty-eight separate editions had been issued.

- C. Imagination and Dramatic Instinct: Some Practical Steps for Their Development. Boston: The Expression Company, 1896. Pp. 369. Hereafter referred to as Imagination.

Curry intended this book for the second course in vocal expression. Like Lessons, Curry designed Imagination to develop the student's mental faculties. Unlike its predecessor, however, which considered conscious mental faculties, Imagination discussed the unconscious mental faculties.

Curry indicated that there were two unconscious faculties which could be subjected to training and development. These were imagination, or the creative instinct, and assimilation, or the dramatic instinct. Though Curry distinguished between these two faculties for teaching purposes, he believed they were closely related. Indeed, in the introduction he argued that assimilation was really just one aspect of imagination.

Partly because its subject matter is more complex and abstract than that of Lessons, Imagination is neither so lucid nor so well organized as its companion volume. The unit on the imagination begins with an attempt to distinguish between imagination and the faculties of conception and memory. The unit then proceeds to explain the role of imagination in science and art, and more particularly, to show how imagination helps the student to participate in the aesthetic experience of poetry. Following

a pattern Curry had established in Lessons, the unit ends with a discussion of the effects of imagination on the voice.

The second unit treats assimilation, and its organization is even looser than that of the opening unit. Though divided into twenty-eight short sections, each treating a separate topic, the unit places particular emphasis on the relationship between the reader and the speaker in the poem being read. Thus, the second chapter discusses "Identification," the sixth chapter discusses "Imitation and Assimilation," the ninth treats "Point of View," the tenth, "Attitude," the twenty-first, "Speaking and Acting," and the twenty-sixth, "Emotional Truthfulness."

Imagination is in many ways Curry's most interesting book; "Binney Gunnison, a graduate of Curry's School of Expression and later its dean, declared that Curry's most important ideas are contained in Imagination and Dramatic Instinct."⁵¹ More recently, in The Speech Teacher, Don Geiger has argued that Imagination represents the first attempt in oral interpretation to present a theory based on a close textual understanding of the poem.⁵²

⁵¹Edyth Renshaw, "Three Schools of Speech: The Emerson College of Oratory; The School of Expression; and The Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), p. 189n.

⁵²Don Geiger, "Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of Literature," The Speech Teacher, XI (September, 1962), 203.

- D. Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible. With an introduction by Francis G. Peabody. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903. Pp. xvii+384. Hereafter referred to as Bible.

The only book not issued through Curry's own publishing house, Bible is perhaps the best written of his numerous volumes. The work is tightly organized, and the style is neither obscure nor repetitious, flaws which frequently mar Curry's other works. The main purpose of the book is to adapt Curry's theory of vocal expression to the specific needs of the minister. Consequently, what is new in the book is not the ideas themselves but their application.

The book opens with a brief introductory unit on the role of the sermon, the prayer, and the scripture lesson in the service. This first unit ends with a brief presentation of Curry's philosophy of vocal expression. The second unit, entitled "The Message," consists of a literary analysis of the Bible. The third unit, "The Technique," is a summary of Curry's ideas presented earlier in Lessons and Imagination. A final unit deals with special problems such as the selection and arrangement of passages in the scripture lesson, the need for rehearsal, the problems of translation, and the requirements of responsive reading.

First published by the Macmillan Company in 1903, the book was later issued by Hodder and Stoughton and George H. Doran Company.

- E. Alexander Melville Bell: Some Memories with Fragments from a Pupil's Note-Book. Boston: School of Expression, 1906. Pp. 84.

This is the first book by Curry which does not deal directly with the subject of vocal expression. A labor of love, this text makes no attempt to present either a definitive biography of Bell nor an objective evaluation of his career. Accurately sub-titled, the book represents Curry's final tribute to a man to whom he felt deeply indebted.

The final section of the book is taken entirely from Curry's notes written when he studied under Bell in Washington, D. C. It is of interest mainly as it indicates the powerful influence Bell exerted over Curry's ideas.

- F. Foundations of Expression: Studies and Problems for Developing the Voice, Body and Mind in Reading and Speaking. Boston: The Expression Company, 1908. Pp. 319. Hereafter referred to as Foundations.

This work represents an attempt to include in a single volume the more important ideas contained in Lessons and Imagination. Restricted entirely to the development of mental faculties, Foundations represents Curry's first attempt to delineate the connection between mental action and bodily movement. Lessons and Imagination deal only with the relationship between mind and voice. This book uses much the same theory to explain the relationship between mind and body. With the publication of Foundations Curry could claim to have related all the elements of delivery to mental activity.

In the establishment of Curry's reputation, Foundations

was as important as the expressionist's earlier books. Immensely popular, the book was still being published in 1930. It is also the only book for which the Expression Company released circulation figures. According to the publishers, by 1930 Foundations had sold over 250,000 copies.

G. Browning and the Dramatic Monologue: Nature and Interpretation of an Overlooked Form of Literature. Boston: Expression Company, 1908. Pp. 308.

Although this book contains no new ideas on vocal expression, it is interesting nonetheless because it presents Curry in the role of literary critic. As the title indicates, the book focuses attention on the literary form of the monologue, with particular emphasis on Browning's use of that form.

Convinced that the monologue was an ideal form of literature for oral interpretation, Curry hoped to present a method of literary analysis which would lead to better understanding and wider use of the monologue in public readings. In the first unit Curry presented his method of analysis. Curry argued that the monologue could be best appreciated by isolating and studying the following elements: the speaker within the poem, the listener within the poem, the place or situation of the poem, and the argument or message of the poem.

In the second unit of the book Curry restated his basic ideas on vocal expression and dealt with particular problems which the monologue might pose for the reader such as "dialect" and "use of properties."

- H. Mind and Voice: Principles and Methods in Vocal Training. Boston: Expression Company, 1910. Pp. xi+456. Hereafter referred to as Mind.

This book is important chiefly because it represents a new kind of endeavor on Curry's part. All of his earlier texts dealt with the "cause" of expression, but this book treats the "means" of expression. The title is deceptive for the book does not seek to demonstrate that the voice responds to strong mental action. Rather, it deals with those problems or "abnormalities" or "habits," as Curry called them, which prevent the voice from responding to the mind. This book consists mainly of drills and exercises for vocal improvement, and it is the closest that Curry ever came to closing ranks with the elocutionary movement.

All of Curry's textbooks written up to 1910 were designated for use in The School of Expression and other institutions of higher learning. After 1910 Curry turned to directions other than the college classroom.

- I. Little Classics: With Initiative Steps in Vocal Training for Oral English. Boston: The Expression Company, 1912. Pp. 384.
- J. Spoken English: A Method of Improving Speech and Reading by Studying Voice Conditions and Modulations in Union with Their Causes in Thinking and Feeling. Boston: The Expression Company, 1913. Pp. 320.

These books are companion volumes and seek to make Curry's theory of vocal expression applicable to the needs of the grammar school and the high school. Little Classics consists largely of selections for reading aloud with brief notes describing the applicable principle or principles of vocal expression. Spoken

English contains few selections for reading aloud and is largely a discussion of principles. Designed for use in English classes, Spoken English seeks to establish a parallel between the teaching of reading and the teaching of vocal expression. Both books are, of course, written in a much simpler style to accomodate the needs of younger students.

- K. The Smile: If You Can Do Nothing Else You Can Smile. Boston: School of Expression, 1915. Pp. 150. Hereafter referred to as Smile.
- L. How to Add Ten Years to Your Life and to Double Its Satisfaction. Boston: School of Expression, 1915. Pp. 140. Hereafter referred to as How to Add.

For the student of Curry's theory of vocal expression, these books hold little interest. Both were written in conjunction with "The Morning League of the School of Expression." This "League" was "a band of students, graduates, and friends of the School of Expression who" kept "their faces toward the morning." All the money earned through this league was "devoted to the endowment of the School of Expression, the home of the League."⁵³ The only requirement for membership in the "League" was willingness to participate in the exercises described in these two books.⁵⁴

Smile is largely given over to a discussion of the role of the body in the full experiencing of emotions. Aside from

⁵³Curry, How to Add Ten Years to Your Life and to Double Its Satisfaction (Boston: School of Expression, 1915), p. 134. Hereafter cited as How to Add.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Curry's detailed distinction between "sign" and "symbol"⁵⁵ there is little here of interest.

How to Add presents a series of bodily exercises to be performed upon awakening in the morning. They are the same exercises used at The School of Expression before the day's classes began.⁵⁶

The following advertisement for the "Morning League" captures the spirit of both these books:

If you wish to join, when you wake GET UP OUT OF THE RIGHT SIDE OF BED, that is, stretch, expand, breathe deeply and laugh. Fill with joyous thoughts and their active expressions the first minute of the day.

Note the effect, and consider yourself initiated.

Try as far as possible EVERY DAY to realize the League's UNFOLDMENT SUGGESTIONS.

1. SMILE whenever tempted to frown; look for and enjoy the best around you.
2. THINK, feel or realize something in the direction of your ideals and in some way, unite your ideals with your everyday work and play.
3. SEE, hear or read, i.e., receive an impression from something beautiful in nature, art, music, poetry, literature or the lives of your fellowmen.
4. EXPRESS the best that is in you and awaken others to express the best in them.
5. SERVE some fellow being by listening, by kind look, tone, word or deed.
6. SHARE in some of the great movements for the betterment of the race. That is use your principles of expression to help in such movements as: (1) Expression in life (textbook, "The Smile"); (2) Expression and Health (textbook, "How to Add Ten Years to Your Life"); (3) Expression and Education in the Nursery; Mother's Clubs; (4) Voice in the Home; (5) Reading in the Public Schools; (6) Speaking in High Schools and Colleges; (7) Speaking Clubs; (8) Browning Clubs (textbook, "Browning and the Dramatic Monologue"); (9) Dramatic Clubs; (10) Religious

⁵⁵See pp. 78-79 in this study.

⁵⁶See p. 234 in this study.

Societies; (11) Boy Scouts; (12) Campfire Girls; (13) Peace Movements; (14) Women's Clubs and Suffrage Organizations; (15) Reforms; (16) Teacher's Clubs; (17) School of Expression Summer Terms; (18) Preparation for the School of Expression; (19) Home Studies; (20) Advanced Steps of the School of Expression.⁵⁷

- M. Hints on the Voice in Giving Commands. Boston: School of Expression, 1918. Pp. 32.

Probably motivated by the war effort, this little pamphlet is addressed exclusively to military personnel. The running title, which differs slightly from that on the title page, reads: Hints to Officers on the Giving of Commands. In the afterword Curry explained that the book arose in response to the reception "through the mail from several universities copies of a letter sent out by the Adjutant-General of the United States calling attention to the lack of voice on the part of applicants for commissions."⁵⁸ The pamphlet consists of sixteen rules, all reminiscent of Curry's earlier publications, particularly Mind and Voice.

- N. Expression: A Quarterly Review of Art, Literature, and the Spoken Word. Vols. 1-6; June, 1895-September, 1900. Subtitle varies. Boston: School of Expression, 1895-1900.

Addressed mainly to students, alumni and friends of The School of Expression, this magazine was published for six years under Curry's editorship. Almost all the articles and reviews were written by Curry himself. While many of Curry's articles

⁵⁷How to Add, p. 134.

⁵⁸Hints on the Voice in Giving Commands (Boston: School of Expression, 1918), p. 29.

deal with activities at The School of Expression, occasionally these essays consist of autobiographical reminiscences, tributes to predecessors and contemporaries, discussions of art and reviews of books. When Curry abandoned the editor's chair in 1900, the magazine was discontinued.

CHAPTER II

CURRY'S DEBT TO EDUCATIONAL THEORY

Curry's interest in expression was intimately connected with a deep interest in the principles of education. He hoped that Province would be a book which would not only define the area of vocal expression, but also show "distinctly its relations to universal education."¹ "This book has been written," he declared in the introduction, "to call attention to the subject, to endeavor to show its connection with modern thought, art and education, and to strive to give leaders in education a clearer conception of its possibilities."²

This chapter describes the relationship between Curry's views on education and his theory of expression. The organization of this chapter conforms to the organization which Curry used in establishing the educational values of the study of expression. With only minor variation, Curry tended to defend expression by demonstrating that the aims of a sound education could best be accomplished by the study of expression. Expression belonged in the educational system, he argued, because it was the best means of achieving the goals of that system. Accordingly,

¹Province, p. vi. ²Ibid., p. viii.

this chapter first presents the aims of a sound education as Curry saw them, second, traces these aims back to those educational theorists who probably influenced Curry, and finally, shows how Curry's conception of expression conformed to the educational methods and aims which those thinkers advocated.

I. The Aims of Education

Curry believed that education should have but a single aim. Curry's most concise statement of the single aim of education is as follows: "Education develops nature's processes, stimulates her impulses and brings them into stronger unity and co-ordination."³

The purpose of this section is to draw out the ramifications and implications which Curry saw in this statement. First, by "nature's processes" Curry had in mind what he referred to as "the natural rhythm" of impression and expression. "A mind that merely receives," he warned, "becomes a kind of educational sponge, a Dominic Sampson, a useless appendage to society."⁴ Education failed to achieve its aim whenever it became one-sided. Indeed, "few would say at the present time that the mere acquirement of knowledge can achieve the ends of education."⁵ Instead,

education may be considered as having two sides; all

³Ibid., p. 196. ⁴Ibid., p. 389. ⁵Ibid.

man's faculties are concerned with taking, or giving, or both. The greatness of the human soul⁶ is seen in its possibility of reception and the possibility of revealing its possessions to others.⁷

Nor was there any doubt in Curry's mind that this impression-expression duality was a natural process. As Curry described it, the impulse to express began the moment a child received a meaningful impression from the outside world. Indeed, Curry believed, a close analogy existed between the mental sequence of impression-expression and the physical sequence of inhalation and exhalation. Expression, he concluded, "is . . . as near to nature as we can get."⁸ Curry himself provided the clearest summary of this point of view when he wrote:

There is not only impression as a process of education, but expression. The soul is not only disciplined by taking, but disciplined also by giving. If all education is primarily dependent upon exercising the human powers, then it can be seen at once that these two phases of education are complementary. Thus the soul must not only be disciplined to take but to give. "Reading makes the full man, conversation the ready man and writing the correct man," said Bacon. Taking these three aims as Bacon's ideal of education, we find that the first, which refers to the reception of truth, is universally recognized, but the other two, which refer to expression, are almost entirely neglected.⁹

⁶Though Curry occasionally used the term "soul" in a different sense, he usually meant by that term the rational, emotional, volitional and imaginative activities of man. For an exhaustive discussion of all the different meanings Curry attributed to "soul" throughout his works, see Edyth Renshaw, "Three Schools of Speech" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), pp. 223-24.

⁷Province, pp. 388-89. ⁸Lessons, p. 15.

⁹Province, pp. 390-91.

Though Curry regarded impression and expression as natural processes found throughout all of nature, he also realized that education was specifically concerned with human nature, and human nature contained unique processes. Education, he concluded, must be concerned with both universal and human processes. When all these processes were coordinated, they formed what Curry called "the normal processes of the soul," and at one point in Province he defined education as "the process of stimulating and developing all the normal processes of the soul and bringing them into greater unity and harmony."¹⁰

Thus, just as education aimed at the development of both impression and expression, it also should seek to develop and coordinate those processes derived from both human nature and universal nature. By distinguishing between these two processes, Curry had conceived of his subject matter as a duality of opposite forces. At one point he described this duality of opposite forces in terms of "instinct" and "reason." "The animal has instinct," he wrote, and therefore, "the carrier pigeon may be carried in darkness by winding ways for hundreds of miles, yet when released it will steer a straight course for its home."¹¹ On the other hand, "man has reason" which "is conscious adaptation of means to an end, or the power to be guided by experience and perception of the most proper means to accomplish an end."¹²

¹⁰Ibid., p. 197. ¹¹Ibid., p. 184. ¹²Ibid.

Curry sometimes described these opposite processes as "conscious" and "unconscious" as in the following passage:

The bird can choose the branch of the tree upon which it sings, but there is very little choice as to its song, and its expression is the immediate result of reflex action or the unconscious, almost involuntary unfoldment of impulses. But man accomplishes his highest results, consciously, rationally and by choice.¹³

Curry's favorite terms for distinguishing between these processes, however, were "spontaneous" and "voluntary." "Spontaneity" Curry defined as "the operation of involuntary action,"¹⁴ and involuntary actions were "those that result independently of will" just as "voluntary actions" were "those produced by will."¹⁵ Thought or reason, according to Curry, represented voluntary action, since man could "control the attention of his mind, direct it to a new object, or . . . call up a new idea or situation."¹⁶ As opposed to these rational activities, emotion was always a spontaneous activity, Curry believed.¹⁷

The great task for education, as Curry saw it, was not only to develop but to unite reason with instinct, the conscious with the unconscious, and the volitional with the spontaneous.

¹³Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁴Curry, Foundations of Expression: Studies and Problems for Developing the Voice, Body and Mind in Reading and Speaking (Boston: The Expression Co., 1908), p. 138. Hereafter cited as Foundations.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 137. These terms also occur in Curry's psychological theory. See Chapter IV of this study.

¹⁶Province, p. 185. ¹⁷Ibid., p. 189.

In fact, "the co-ordination of the deliberative and the spontaneous has been the work of all reformers in education."¹⁸

The perfect unity of spontaneous processes with deliberative or volitional processes Curry called "Artistic Spontaneity." "Artistic Spontaneity" was "the harmonious union of involuntary action with voluntary and conscious actions."¹⁹ Though Curry believed that nature produced both the spontaneous and the voluntary processes of man, he regarded "Artistic Spontaneity" as a product of education alone. True education, he insisted, recognized nature's intentions; it preserved what nature intended to be spontaneous and what she intended to be volitional, but, at the same time, education sought a "mysterious co-ordination" of these natural processes. Only education, therefore, could produce "true" or "Artistic Spontaneity":

True spontaneity, therefore, does not mean an absence of deliberation, but the simultaneous action of the deliberative, the conscious and the spontaneous elements in their own proper sphere, and a co-ordinate union of them in any great impulse.²⁰

Education, he insisted, must coordinate all of nature's processes and repress none. "Repression is one of the greatest dangers of all education."²¹ By developing all "the normal processes of the soul" instead of a one-sided development of intellect, Curry argued, education would shape the human being along the lines

¹⁸Ibid., p. 207. ¹⁹Foundations, p. 138.

²⁰Province, p. 200. ²¹Foundations, p. 135.

intended by nature. "Every law discovered, from Newton's law of gravitation to the latest phase of evolution, has revealed more and more the unity of nature."²²

By developing the processes of impression and expression and by coordinating the spontaneous with the deliberative, Curry argued, education not only fulfilled nature's intentions, it also fostered in the student both freedom and character.

Curry discussed the first of these traits in several texts. "Freedom," he wrote in Lessons, "is the opportunity granted to anything to accomplish the ends of its being."²³ An education which developed both volitional as well as spontaneous faculties was simply developing a natural man, and "to be natural it is necessary to be free."²⁴ "However we may regard nature, we find that freedom is one of her salient characteristics. To find repression, we must come to the realm of man."²⁵

On the other hand, "freedom does not mean license. . . . Freedom is possibility of acting in accordance with law; license is unbridled disobedience of law, and sooner or later destroys freedom."²⁶ "Laws," for Curry, did not refer to legal restrictions or what he called "external limits," but rather, to the principles and dictates of nature. "Freedom is the opportunity granted to any object to fulfill the ends of its existence; to unfold its implanted forces in its own implanted way."²⁷

²²Province, p. 178. ²³Lessons, p. 14. ²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Province, p. 180. ²⁶Ibid. ²⁷Ibid.

The second result of a natural education, character development, received detailed consideration in Curry's books. Natural education would develop character in the student, he argued, because such an education emphasized both impression and expression. If the student merely received knowledge without training in expression or execution, he received no discipline: "Acquirement may not of itself discipline men's faculties 'To know may be first, but it is only by doing,' . . . that knowledge comes into being and character is developed."²⁸

Furthermore, by developing all of nature's processes, education would train the student to "assimilate" rather than to "absorb" truth. If education concentrated only on the development of intellectual processes or "the mere acquirement of knowledge,"²⁹ the truths that were taught "may be merely in the memory."³⁰ But if all the natural processes were developed, the student would realize truths emotionally as well as intellectually. Truth would become not just a part of his memory, "a mere aggregation," but would be "assimilated by experience." It was not enough, Curry insisted, that the intellect alone should grasp a truth. Education should make the student so vividly aware of the truth that he would react emotionally to it. Only when a student realized truth both intellectually and emotionally did that

²⁸Ibid., p. 391. ²⁹Ibid., p. 389.

³⁰Imagination, p. 312.

truth become a part of his experience.³¹

By developing all the processes of man, therefore, education "secures the development of philosophic memory rather than mere verbal memory."³² The result of a complete education, Curry reasoned, helped the student "not merely to acquire knowledge," but to "carry it into the depths of man's experience and character."³³ When a truth entered the verbal memory, Curry insisted, it was still no part of the student's character, but let it enter the philosophic memory, and the truth would become a part of his personality. When education stressed emotional as well as intellectual perception, the student not only absorbed truth, he experienced it, and what was experienced molded character:

Experience gives definiteness of character; it implies the wisdom of an expert. The word etymologically implies going through and coming out of something. Accordingly, experience is the result of passing through and coming out of certain situations. Thus, experience in life develops character; the lack of the development of character is almost synonymous with lack of experience. Experience places a definite mark upon personality.³⁴

Therefore, to Curry's mind education had to be a force which not only developed all the various processes, but one which brought to the student "that unity, freedom, variety and spontaneity which are universal characteristics of nature."³⁵ When education

³¹Province, p. 398. ³²Ibid. ³³Ibid., p. 399.

³⁴Imagination, p. 193. ³⁵Province, p. 194.

met its true responsibility, the student "becomes so to speak, two beings--becomes a great channel of thought and emotion."³⁶

To summarize, although Curry discussed the aims of education in a variety of contexts and with a variety of terminology, he really advocated but a single aim for education, the development and unification of all nature's processes. By "nature's processes" Curry meant, first of all, both the process of impression and the process of expression. There was a great rhythmic process, he argued, throughout nature. There could be no inspiration without expiration, and there could be no impression without expression in the universe. Furthermore, educators could not hope to develop character unless they included giving as well as receiving. Only when the student expressed the truths he had received did they become a part of his character.

Curry also interpreted "nature's processes" as including both the voluntary and the spontaneous. The general tendency of education, he feared, was to become one-sided, to stress only the intellectual volitional processes. Education, he argued, should treat the whole man; it should develop the emotional and spontaneous processes as well, if nature's intentions were to be fulfilled. Such an education emancipated the individual, freeing him to develop the full potential of his being. Furthermore, development of the whole man was the only means of developing

³⁶Ibid.

character, for only when a man realized a truth emotionally as well as intellectually could he assimilate that truth into his experience and his character.

II. The Sources of Curry's Educational Theory

Curry's views on the aims of education largely conform to the principal tenets of the naturalistic movement in education. According to one historian, educational naturalism "holds that nature alone contains within itself uniform principles of change, the causes of all the facts of life, the knowledge of which is necessary for progressive mankind, itself a product of nature."³⁷ In short, "philosophers of the naturalistic bent are united in common belief that nature contains the solution of all problems that concern men and the universe."³⁸

Curry's educational philosophy may be classified as naturalistic for two reasons. First of all, Curry viewed nature not as a force antagonistic to education, but as the guiding principle of education. His observations on the aims of education clearly imply that education was valid only as long as it concentrated on the development of "nature's processes."

In the second place, Curry's philosophy reflects a

³⁷Geoffrey O'Connell, Naturalism in American Education (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1936), p. 2.

³⁸Ibid., p. 7.

naturalistic orientation in the educational sources its author so frequently cited. Among these sources Curry referred most frequently to four figures: Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. In Province he declared:

All progress and reform in education from time immemorial, directly or indirectly, have lain along the line of expression, from Rousseau's emphasis of nature as opposed to conventionality, Comenius' founding all education upon the processes of nature's growth, Pestalozzi's "things, not their signs," Froebel's principle of using objects to "arouse the faculties of the mind to spontaneous activity," down to the natural methods of teaching language and the principles contended for in our manual schools.³⁹

All of these men, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, rank among the chief figures in the naturalistic movement in education.

All four educational philosophers like Curry accepted the development of nature's processes as the keystone of all educational theory. Comenius was the earliest educator whom Curry cited frequently, and Comenius had as his central purpose "to bring education into harmony with the laws of nature so that all men might acquire all knowledge."⁴⁰ And in Province, Curry exclaimed:

What lessons can be learned from Comenius! The great principle that education must be from within out, has already been applied to expression in this work. The writer thought at first that the principle was original, but found it was unfolded by Comenius in relation to all education. As we proceed in the study of Comenius

³⁹Province, p. 396.

⁴⁰James Mulhern, A History of Education (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1946), p. 270.

we find the lessons so numerous that they can not be enumerated. All the principles unfolded by Comenius, such as, that "nature never makes any leaps", sic apply directly to the development of expression.⁴¹

Nor was Curry any less indebted to the work of Rousseau. While discussing the virtues of natural vs. mechanical education, Curry observed that "it was the discussion of this problem in Rousseau's 'Emile' that started the investigations out of which have arisen all the advanced methods of education in modern times." According to Curry, "Rousseau contended that nature was always right; that man must grow as the tree grows."⁴²

Pestalozzi and Froebel followed directly in the tradition of Comenius and Rousseau, and their educational theory is often described as the offspring of Emile.⁴³ Thus, Curry could write: "Again, Pestalozzi and Froebel furnish innumerable principles of like application. Nature must be observed."⁴⁴

But Curry's indebtedness to these men extends even to his more specific discussions of the aims of education. Education must develop both the process of impression and the process of expression, he had asserted in Province, and this same idea is the basis for the educational reform which Pestalozzi had advocated.

⁴¹Province, p. 375. ⁴²Ibid., pp. 205-06.

⁴³André Boutet de Monvel, "Introduction," in Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1955), p. lx.

⁴⁴Province, p. 375.

The fundamental principle of education Pestalozzi described as "the ABC of Observation," and this

implied among other items, the following basic procedures:

1. Reduction of subject matter to its simplest elements, objective and concrete in character;
2. Grading these elements psychologically, or according to their difficulty for individual students--from the simple to the complex;
3. Observation of these elements; and
4. Expression by the pupils of impressions regarding the elements thus observed.⁴⁵

In addition to the observation and assimilation of knowledge, "the mechanical power of hand and speech is necessary to express the internal concepts of an artistic nature."⁴⁶ Even the seventeenth-century Comenius had insisted that "in teaching, then, the inmost part, i.e. the understanding of the subject comes first; then let the thing understood be used to exercise the memory, the speech, and the hands."⁴⁷

As noted earlier Curry also insisted that education must develop all of nature's processes, the spontaneous as well as the volitional, and here his ideas reflect the influence of Rousseau. Though Curry felt that Rousseau went too far in making man merely an outgrowth of impulse, most educational systems went

⁴⁵Mulhern, p. 364. Italics mine.

⁴⁶Sister Mary Romana Walch, Pestalozzi and the Pestalozzian Theory of Education: A Critical Study (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), p. 102.

⁴⁷Robert Hebert Quick, Essays on Educational Reformers (Syracuse, N. Y.: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1896), p. 96.

too far "in the direction of the conventional regulation." Indeed, "the greatest and most difficult problem in education has been 'to bring such objects before the mind of the child as will stimulate the faculties to spontaneous activity.'" It was this tendency of education to make all volitional, Curry asserted, that had motivated Rousseau to struggle "for the return to nature and the development of nature's impulses and instinct."⁴⁸

Finally, Curry's belief that education should coordinate the natural processes of man was also a part of the educational philosophies of those in the naturalistic movement. Unity as an educational goal played a particularly important role in the theory of Friedrich Froebel, and this educator's point of view was perhaps the closest to that of Curry of any of these educational theorists.

Like Curry's, Froebel's approach to unity was fundamentally grounded in mysticism. Curry wrote that in all human action "there is something mystic and hidden,"⁴⁹ and this mystic and hidden center of expression was an impulse which moved "from within outward" subordinating "all parts to this center."⁵⁰ Hence, there was a need for unity if man were to be true to his nature, for unity implied "a diversity resulting from a central impulse of life."⁵¹ Likewise, Froebel viewed all human action as the result

⁴⁸Province, pp. 206-07. ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 178. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 179.

of a mystic central force which he described as "the single foundation, the single fount of all existence, essence, and life."⁵² And furthermore, since human life began with a single unified impulse, education should constantly strive to develop and maintain this unity:

From this mystical pantheism followed the principle of the unity of man, nature, and God, from which all the educational principles of Froebel are deduced, either directly or indirectly. Unity and continuity in the development of the race and of the child, the culture-epoch theory, and connectedness in the studies which a pupil pursues were minor derivatives from his fundamental principle of "unity," and each one had its educational implication.⁵³

In addition both Curry and Froebel believed that this central impulse was a creative impulse which required the coordination of man's faculties for its development. "United to the creative spirit of God," Froebel declared, man "is endowed with creative energy. . . . His education ought to stimulate the exercise of his creative capacity."⁵⁴ More and more the thought possessed Froebel "that the one thing needful for man was unity of development, perfect evolution in accordance with the laws of his being."⁵⁵

Curry, after referring directly to Froebel's dictum that "all education was emancipation," concluded that "the whole soul

⁵²Friedrich Froebel, Education by Development: The Second Part of the Pedagogics of the Kindergarten, trans. Josephine Jarvis (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1909), p. 171.

⁵³Mulhern, p. 376. ⁵⁴Froebel, quoted in Ibid., p. 377.

⁵⁵Quick, p. 257.

is a unity and must unfold in all directions." Let education achieve "harmony of all the powers of the man," and "the creative energies of the man, especially the imaginative, the instincts and intuitions are quickened into life."⁵⁶

Curry attributed his belief that the full development of nature's processes resulted in freedom to Froebel: "Froebel said that all education was emancipation."⁵⁷ Yet, Rousseau had expressed the same idea in Emile:

No doubt I am not free not to desire my own welfare, I am not free to desire my own hurt; but my freedom consists in this very thing, that I can will what is for my own good, or what I esteem as such, without any external compulsion. Does it follow that I am not my own master because I cannot be other than myself?⁵⁸

Ernest Hunter Wright has presented an explication of this passage of Rousseau which applies equally well to Curry's insistence that freedom did not mean license:

We begin with simple independence, or the form of freedom a wild animal enjoys. In one sense it is far from total. We are hemmed into our little round by all the laws of nature, by a legion of inexorable facts such as that fire will burn, that stones are hard, that we must eat to live, and that we shall fall if we miss our footing. We are absolutely dependent on earth, air, and water, and there are a thousand things we may not do for one we may. But no one cares about all this, for it is not in our nature to fret over it or to feel our freedom scanted by it. So in

⁵⁶Province, p. 394.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Rousseau, Emile, p. 243.

another sense the freedom is complete.⁵⁹

To will only the right is to be whole, an integer again, and free; to will the wrong is to put self at strife with reason, and whoso is at strife is not at liberty. To obey the law against our will is to be its slave, but to make our will one with the law is to be king. So when our will becomes autonomously one with principle we shall know the ultimate freedom.⁶⁰

Next, Curry's belief that character development came from a natural education was also an important part of naturalistic philosophy. Comenius, for one, had asserted that "within us Nature has implanted the seeds of (1) learning, (2) virtue, and (3) piety. To bring these to maturity is the object of education."⁶¹ Rousseau had also insisted that the development of the intellectual faculty alone could not stimulate the development of moral character:

Reason alone can fashion our natural goodness into virtue. But she can do no more. She can show us right and wrong, but she has no power to move us to the love of right or to the hatred of wrong. Conscience only can do that; only by our inborn sentiment are we moved to love the right and hate the wrong that reason sets apart for us. Without reason we should never know them, and without conscience we should rest indifferent to them. Conscience is the moral force, reason the moral guide.⁶²

And finally, Pestalozzi had not only insisted that "the ultimate goal of development is moral perfection,"⁶³ but that the

⁵⁹Ernest Hunter Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 27.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 29. ⁶¹Quick, pp. 94-95.

⁶²Wright, p. 15. ⁶³Walch, p. 80.

development of moral character was intimately connected with the development of the spontaneous faculty of emotion. "Most of Pestalozzi's moral and religious development is based on feelings." Indeed, "it is highly improbable that he considered the moral faculty of right and wrong anything other than feeling."⁶⁴

In short, Curry's belief that education should stress both impression and expression, that it should develop and coordinate all the faculties into a natural unity and that it would thereby achieve the development of both freedom and moral character represents a point of view advocated by such prominent educational philosophers as Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel.

III. Education and Expression

Curry advocated the inclusion of vocal expression in educational systems for two reasons. First, vocal expression shared all the more worthy aims of education, and second, the development of expression utilized the means or methods advocated by the soundest educational philosophers.

Vocal Expression and the Aims of Education

First, Curry argued, vocal expression fought the tendency of education to become one-sided by stressing expression as well as impression. "What is the mission of your school?" he asked the alumni of The School of Expression:

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 107.

Pestalozzi founded education upon the study of man, and became the father of modern education. He showed the two sides,--reception, or acquisition, on the one hand, and production, or creation, on the other. We call these two phases of education Impression and Expression. To the first of these he gave its a,b,c. Froebel carried on the work, and gave something of the a,b,c to the second. These two sides of education are as essential to each other as the two acts of breathing. Respiration consists not merely in taking breath, but also in giving it out,--in expiration as well as inspiration. Froebel gave an impulse to the expressive side of education in elemental instruction; but its broader and higher application in the higher educational institutions is still largely ignored. Mere acquisition and instruction, not discipline of the mind, much less skill and power to express, is still the rule in colleges of the world. Your school, by its very name, as well as by its work, is endeavoring to emphasize this neglected phase of education; or rather, to carry on that reform which has been hinted at by all the leaders of modern education.⁶⁵

Second, expression assured that all the faculties of man would be developed. Referring to the debate between Huxley and Arnold over education, Curry concluded that "the real antithesis" was "between scientific education and artistic education." Scientific education, he believed, aimed at "the development of specialists," while artistic education aimed at "the harmonious development of all the faculties of the mind in their normal relation to each other, and in response to the spontaneous desire for creative activity generated by the true assimilation of knowledge."⁶⁶ Thus, to Curry, vocal expression

⁶⁵Curry, quoted in J. H. Wiggin, "Testimonial Birthday Banquet," Expression, II (December, 1896), 269.

⁶⁶Province, p. 392.

was "the most effective mode of cultivating the artistic faculty,"⁶⁷ for vocal expression developed this faculty not by "the use of a mechanical chisel, brush or instrument," but by "the proper use of the man's own body for the revelation of his soul."⁶⁸

Next, vocal expression assured the unity of all man's faculties because good expression "must seem to be the result and co-ordination of all the faculties and powers of the soul." Without unity, "there never can be true expression."⁶⁹ And in Imagination Curry insisted that the "law of unity applies with special force to all forms of vocal expression. It contains the greatest variety of action, mental, emotional, and physical; . . . yet all must be . . . expressed in unity."⁷⁰

Finally, expression developed moral character, Curry argued, because it caused the student to assimilate truth rather than merely memorize it. An important step in vocal expression was "the development of the natural power [of the student] to identify himself with the situation about which he speaks; to reveal in expression his point of view, and his relations to the truth."⁷¹ Thus, vocal expression "secures the development of philosophic memory rather than mere verbal memory. . . . In fact, vocal expression furnishes the most perfect training for . . . philosophic memory."⁷²

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 393. ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 394. ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 179.

⁷⁰Imagination, p. 354. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 194.

⁷²Province, p. 398.

Vocal Expression and
Educational Methods

All of those educational thinkers whom Curry admired turned to nature not only for aims but for methods of instruction. "Methods of teaching, Comenius viewed as of equal importance with the curriculum. 'Follow nature' is his fundamental rule of method."⁷³ Rousseau was perhaps the most vehement of those educators in his insistence upon natural methods, "Pestalozzi's method included 'the entire scope of education according to Nature,'"⁷⁴ and Froebel asserted that education must "give the children employment in agreement with their whole nature."⁷⁵

It is not surprising then, that Curry insisted in Province that any artificial method for teaching expression which ignored nature would always fail. "Such a course is especially harmful in expression, for nature must furnish, not only the tools, but also the method of procedure itself."⁷⁶

In addition to the general dictum, "follow nature," the natural educators also advocated specific teaching techniques. All of these philosophers sought an alternative to the "belief that learning comes only through fear and terror,"⁷⁷ and Froebel for one proposed teaching by play. "In the Kindergarten [a name which Froebel invented], the children's

⁷³Milhern, p. 271. ⁷⁴Walsh, p. 118.

⁷⁵Froebel, quoted in Quick, p. 265.

⁷⁶Province, p. 168. ⁷⁷Milhern, p. 365.

employment should be play." Such a method, according to Froebel, would motivate the children since play was "any occupation in which children delight." At the same time the children would learn, since play would serve "to strengthen their bodies, to exercise their senses, to engage their awakening mind, and through their senses to bring them [sic] acquainted with nature and their fellow creatures."⁷⁸

Curry took great pains to show that vocal expression was consonant with Froebel's theory. In How to Add, he wrote:

Froebel has taught the true spirit and importance of play. Some people consider his explanation as being purely speculative, if not insane; but the great majority of those who have really studied child life agree with him.⁷⁹

"Play," he insisted, "is given to stimulate and to express the spontaneous in us, to manifest emotion and imagination." Furthermore, "the poet, Schiller, explained all art as being derived from the play instinct." "Arts," therefore, "are given us rather for avocations, for our enjoyment, as a test of our ability to appreciate the different points of view." The art of vocal expression like all the arts was based upon play, and by means of play its aim was "to guide our energies in higher directions, and to stimulate our ideals."⁸⁰

Next, all of these educators believed that education

⁷⁸Froebel, quoted in Quick, p. 265.

⁷⁹How to Add, p. 115. ⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 115-16.

should begin with direct observation of objects before proceeding to the words which represent those objects. "We should learn, says Comenius, . . . not from books, but from the great book of Nature, from heaven and earth, from oaks and beeches."⁸¹ And in Emile Rousseau declared that the teacher should "never substitute the symbol for the thing signified, unless it is impossible to show the thing itself."⁸² Pestalozzi had insisted that "words, which are the signs of things, must never be taught the child till he has grasped the idea of the thing signified,"⁸³ and Froebel stated that education was the "process of bringing such objects before the mind as will stimulate spontaneous activity."⁸⁴

All of these men argued that the senses must be trained first; therefore, their comments were aimed mainly at teachers of the very young. Curry devoted only one book to the expressive education of very young students, but there he insisted that:

All expression must be associated with observation, with nature-study. Pupils will remember what they have seen. Teachers must be sure that everything read about has been seen and observed at first hand. Leaves, flowers, even animals should be taken to the school. Sometimes pictures may be used but only to help students to identify objects.⁸⁵

⁸¹Quick, p. 99. ⁸²Rousseau, p. 133.

⁸³Quick, p. 245. ⁸⁴Froebel, quoted in Province, p. 388.

⁸⁵Curry, Little Classics: With Initiative Steps in Vocal Training for Oral English (Boston: The Expression Co., 1912), p. 12. Hereafter cited as Little Classics.

Only after the student had experienced direct observation of nature through his own senses was he ready for the oral expression of literature.

But even the study of literature by means of oral expression, according to Curry, could be true to the edicts of the natural educators, for:

Art is not a representation of objects, or even of the conception of objects: it is the intervention of personality; it is the revelation of the feeling soul; it is the expression of the man.⁸⁶

When the student read poetry aloud, by necessity, he would penetrate beyond the rational meaning of a poem and grasp its emotional significance as well.⁸⁷

Finally, Curry was particularly interested in discovering a teaching method to develop the emotional faculties. Intellect and volition had long been included in education, but emotion was still being neglected. "Feeling is mystic," he claimed, "and no satisfactory explanation has yet been given of the elements or even the classification of emotions. . . . Emotion is still not understood."⁸⁸ But Rousseau had insisted that education must develop feeling: "To exist is to feel; our feeling is undoubtedly earlier than our intelligence."⁸⁹ Rousseau also presented a method for development of feeling. As

⁸⁶Imagination, p. 31. ⁸⁷Province, p. 398.

⁸⁸⁸⁶Imagination, p. 31. ⁸⁷Province, p. 398.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 201. ⁸⁹Rousseau, p. 253.

noted above, Rousseau would develop feeling by training the student's senses and powers of observation. Curry also believed that training of emotion should begin with the development of the senses. Only through his senses, he declared, could man feel the truth as well as know it.⁹⁰

Yet, Rousseau had asserted that the education of the senses alone could not develop emotion:

The life of finite creatures is so poor and narrow that the mere sight of what is arouses no emotion. It is fancy which decks reality, and if imagination does not lend its charm to that which touches our senses, our barren pleasure is confined to the senses alone, while the heart remains cold.⁹¹

Rousseau argued that training of fancy and imagination was necessary for the development of emotion. The first natural passion, he asserted, is "self-love, which concerns itself only with ourselves, and is content to satisfy our own needs."⁹² Left untended, Rousseau believed, self-love would eventually degenerate into selfishness.⁹³ Yet, when the imagination is trained, sympathy and "the tender and gentle passions spring from self-love":⁹⁴

When his [the student's] imagination is kindled by the first beginning of growing sensibility, he begins to perceive himself in his fellow-creatures, to be

⁹⁰ [Curry], "Professor Corson on Literary Study and Vocal Expression," Expression, I (June, 1895), 23.

⁹¹ Rousseau, pp. 122-23. ⁹² Ibid., p. 174.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 174-75. ⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

touched by their cries, to suffer in their sufferings. It is at this time that the sorrowful picture of suffering humanity should stir his heart with the first touch of pity he has ever known.⁹⁵

Curry also believed that the development of emotion required the presence of imagination. "Imagination," he wrote, "arouses feeling by vividly conceiving ideas as present realities. . . . Imaginative insight kindles and deepens emotion."⁹⁶ Finally, Curry advocated the stimulation of imagination, because, like Rousseau, he believed it would develop the sympathetic emotions:

Imagination lies at the foundation of all altruistic instinct, whether of art or ethics. . . . Imagination is the faculty which enables us to enter into sympathy with our fellow-men. By its power alone can we appreciate the point of view of those different from ourselves.⁹⁷

By teaching vocal expression as play reduced to order, by concentrating the student's attention on art rather than words, and by developing emotion through the stimulation of the senses and the imagination, Curry felt his teaching methods to be in harmony with those men in the naturalistic educational movement.

Given the intellectual environment of his time, the attraction of the naturalistic philosophy of education for Curry is not remarkable. Even before Curry's birth, American education had begun to respond to naturalism, particularly the naturalism

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 183. ⁹⁶Imagination, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 8-9.

of Pestalozzi and Froebel. According to one historian:

Their [Pestalozzi's and Froebel's] theoretical influence was already widely spread in the first half of the nineteenth century both in Germany and America. In America, for instance, Warren Colburn's First Lessons in Arithmetic on the Plan of Pestalozzi (1821) was for a long time the most popular arithmetical text-book [sic] at a time when scarcely any teacher in England had heard of the new methods.⁹⁸

Furthermore, "a voluminous literature on Pestalozzianism came into being in America between 1820-1860,"⁹⁹ and this literature included several articles on naturalism in The American Journal of Education, edited by William Russell, 1826-1830, and The American Annals of Education, edited by William C. Woodbridge, 1831-1839.¹⁰⁰

By 1862 the Education Board of Oswego, New York, had accepted an educational system based on the principles of naturalism, and "from Oswego the new methods spread rapidly through the North and West of the United States."¹⁰¹

Nor was Boston, Curry's adopted city, immune to the influence of the naturalists. In 1844 the venerable Horace Mann enthusiastically reported to the citizens of Massachusetts his observations of the new educational philosophy in European

⁹⁸A. D. C. Peterson, A Hundred Years of Education (2d ed.; New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 90.

⁹⁹O'Connell, p. 61. ¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Peterson, p. 91.

schools.¹⁰² The growing popularity of naturalism gained further impetus from the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859 and his Descent of Man in 1871. As John H. Randall has remarked:

Now after Darwin, however, there could be no further blinking of the fact that man was a product as well as a part of nature, that he had climbed to his present estate from lowly origins, and that all his works had been painfully acquired in the struggle against a hostile environment. While men had long recognized that man is a rational animal, they had perhaps not unnaturally emphasized his distinguishing mark of rationality; but now reason was well-nigh forgotten in the new realization of his common animality.¹⁰³

As a result of this new impetus, Boston, particularly the Boston of Curry's day, was susceptible to the influence of naturalism. Two men were particularly important in Boston's acceptance of naturalism. These men were John Fiske and Charles Eliot. Fiske lectured extensively on the naturalistic point of view, and his Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy went through many editions.

But according to Geoffrey O'Connell, "the various naturalistic trends . . . introduced into America find their best

¹⁰²Horace Mann, "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education (Facsimile ed., 1950; Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1844), pp. 9-199.

¹⁰³John H. Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1926), p. 483.

expression and synthesis . . . in the work of Charles W. Eliot.¹⁰⁴ As president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, Eliot was in a position to exert a powerful influence upon American educational thought.¹⁰⁵

Given all these circumstances, it would have been remarkable if Curry had not been influenced by naturalism in his educational philosophy. Not only was it the dominant theory of education in America in the latter half of the nineteenth century,¹⁰⁶ but Boston was an important center for its dissemination in America. Finally, though he did not make any mention of Fiske, as a member of the Harvard faculty from 1891 to 1902¹⁰⁷ Curry was probably familiar with President Eliot's views on education.

The widespread popularity of naturalism in the late nineteenth century explains the predominant role that philosophy was to play in Curry's educational theory. There is less evidence, however, to explain the particular stress Curry placed on Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel. Curry did not indicate in his own writings just when or why he was attracted to these particular

¹⁰⁴O'Connell, p. 67.

¹⁰⁵"Eliot, Charles William," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., VIII, 357-58.

¹⁰⁶O'Connell, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷Nathan Haskell Dole, "Foreword," in Curry, Poems by Samuel Silas Curry, Ph.D., Litt.D., ed. with a foreword by Nathan Haskell Dole (Boston: Expression Co., 1922), p. 11.

theorists.

He probably cited Pestalozzi and Froebel as often as he did because they were probably the most famous representatives of educational naturalism in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸

Curry's reliance on Rousseau may have been motivated by the respect of nineteenth-century educators for Rousseau's ideas. Curry's familiarity with Pestalozzi may have led the expressionist to an appreciation of Rousseau as an educational theorist. Pestalozzi frequently described his own work as an attempt to find practical application of Rousseau's ideas, and according to W. H. Burton, "Pestalozzi was a visionary enthusiast inspired to great idealistic effort by Rousseau's writing."¹⁰⁹

Why Curry selected Comenius for emphasis is not clear. Though a clear connection existed among the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, none of these men were conscious disciples of Comenius. Indeed, for almost two hundred years after Comenius' death in 1670, his ideas had remained in obscurity. With the rise of naturalism's popularity in the nineteenth century, however, Comenius had "suddenly become a gigantic figure in the history of education."¹¹⁰ Perhaps Curry

¹⁰⁸O'Connell, p. 58.

¹⁰⁹William H. Burton, Introduction to Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1934), p. 608.

¹¹⁰William T. Kane and John J. O'Brien, History of Education: Considered Chiefly in Its Development in the Western World (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1954), p. 177.

was attracted to Comenius because he believed him to be the originator of the educational movement Curry found most appealing.

IV. Summary

Curry's concept of education was derived principally from the tenets of the naturalistic movement in education. In defending his own views on education, Curry most frequently cited the authority of Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. Like these educators, Curry believed education should aim at the development and unity of all of nature's faculties. Education, he insisted, must include both "impression" and "expression," terms which Curry probably borrowed directly from Pestalozzi. Furthermore, education must develop and not repress the emotional and the intellectual, the voluntary and the spontaneous and must secure a rational unity of those opposing processes. Such an education, he asserted, would result in both freedom and moral character. Finally, education must turn to nature for its methodology. The student must learn because he wants to learn. He must learn through direct contact with objects and not verbal symbols, and he must develop feeling through stimulation of his senses and his imagination.

CHAPTER III

CURRY'S DEBT TO PHILOLOGY

In the first volume of Expression magazine, Curry wrote:

In the proper arrangement of the English department in any college there should be four divisions: first, philology, or the study of the history and development of the language; second, literature, the study of the great masterpieces, of the forms of poetry, of the entire embodiment of the life of the race; third, rhetoric or composition, practical methods for the development of a correct and effective use of one's native language; and last of all, a department of speaking and vocal expression.¹

That Curry should have listed philology as the first division of his ideal English department was probably not fortuitous, but deliberate. In his published textbooks Curry often approached vocal expression as a coordination of different languages whose structure and function the student must master. He believed that vocal expression, like any other art form, should be regarded as a form of language.² Expression, Curry insisted, "is really the aim of all language, the aim of all art, the aim of all modes of communicating the thoughts and feelings of man; in short language is . . . a means of expression."³

While the principal concern of his books is to instruct

¹[Curry], "Departments of English in Colleges," Expression, III (September, 1897), 387-88.

²Province, p. 26. ³Ibid., p. 28.

in the practical application of language to the needs of oral communication, this instruction usually begins with some discussion of what language is, what it can accomplish and what it cannot. These books treat language as the fundamental tool of the interpretative reader, a tool which the reader must thoroughly understand.

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to describe Curry's concept of language and to show the principal sources of that concept. More specifically, this chapter describes Curry's concept of language as a blend of ideas derived both from elocution and from nineteenth-century philology.

I. Nature of Language

In Province, Curry quoted from the works of only one philologist, the early nineteenth-century German linguistic scholar, Wilhelm von Humboldt. Despite this failure to mention the philological theories of any of a host of scholars who followed Humboldt in the nineteenth century, Curry's book indicates considerable interest in philological theory on the part of its author. His application of Humboldt's ideas to his own theory of oral expression reflects a close reading and clear understanding of Humboldt's difficult philosophy of language. Indeed, so thoroughgoing was the influence of the philologist upon the expressionist's thought that some explanation of Humboldt's attraction for Curry is in order.

First, the span of Humboldt's life (1765-1835) places him

within the contexts of the expressive movement, the same movement which so profoundly influenced Curry's aesthetic theory.⁴ Like Curry, Humboldt was keenly interested in expressive aesthetics, especially as it influenced literature. The German scholar was an intimate friend of Schiller and Goethe,⁵ wrote critical essays on their art and indicated in his writings on aesthetics a philosophical position remarkably similar to that of Curry.⁶

Second, Curry preferred speculative discussions over technical treatments,⁷ and in Humboldt's writings, Curry could find a treatment of language consonant with this preference. This is not to say that Humboldt ignored technical treatment of

⁴See Chapter V in this study.

⁵Marianne Cowan, "Introduction," in Wilhelm von Humboldt, Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt, comp. and trans. with an intro. by Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 10.

⁶Compare, for example, the position of Curry in Imagination with the following by Humboldt: "The field which the poet tills as his property is the field of imagination. Only his preoccupation with it, and only insofar as he is strongly and exclusively at work on it, gives him the right to his name. He must transform nature, which ordinarily yields objects for sensuous perception only, into materials for the imagination. To transform reality into an image is the most general task of all art, to which all other tasks in art are more or less directly subordinated.

"To be successful, the artist need only pursue one path. He must wipe every memory of reality from our soul and preserve only our imagination mobile and alive." (Humboldt, p. 161.)

⁷This preference is also apparent in Curry's discussions of psychology. See chapter IV of this study.

language:

Beginning with 1820 we find titles such as "On the Sanskrit verbal forms formed by the suffixes tya and ya"; "On Comparative linguistics with special reference to the various periods of linguistic development," "Attempt at an analysis of the Mexican language," "On the development of grammatical forms and their influence upon the history of ideas"; "On the most general principles of word accent, with special consideration of Greek accentuation"; "On the national characteristics of languages"; "On the relationships between writing and language"; "On the grammatical structure of the Chinese language"; "Essays on the American language"; "Basic characteristics of linguistic types"; "On the dual form"; "On the languages of the South Sea Islands"; "On the relationship of the Greek Past Perfect, the reduplicating Aorist, and the Attic Perfect, with Sanskrit tense development"; "On the differences in human linguistic structure."⁸

Nevertheless, though Humboldt's "own studies covered a variety of languages, . . . his works do not give us many actual concrete facts from the languages he had studied; he was more interested in abstract reasonings on language in general than in detail."⁹

Finally and perhaps most important, Humboldt, like Curry, was a champion of the spoken word over the written word. Early in the third chapter in Province, Curry quoted Humboldt on this point:

Humboldt, the father of philology, held that only a spoken word could be considered a real word. "It is," said he, "only by the spoken word that the speaker breathes, as it were, his inner soul into the soul

⁸Cowan, p. 18.

⁹Otto Jespersen, Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1924), p. 58.

of his hearers. Written language is only the imperfect and mummy-like embalming, of which the highest use is that it may serve as a means of reproducing the living utterances."¹⁰

Curry was quoting from Humboldt's essay, "On the Differences in Human Linguistic Structure and Their Influences on the Spiritual Development of the Human Race." In the same paragraph, Humboldt had concluded that the philologist must be primarily concerned with the spoken word.¹¹

Though Curry may have been acquainted with all of Humboldt's publications, he quoted only from the philologist's essay cited above. Consequently, this chapter will focus primary attention on the influence of this single essay. It is the most famous of Humboldt's linguistic publications, and has been called "the textbook of the philosophy of speech."¹²

Three ideas in Humboldt's essay find their ways into Curry's theory of expression. They are: (1) that the character and structure of a language expressed the spirit of the nation which invented that language; (2) that language referred to the "inner life and knowledge" of the individual who used it, and (3) that spoken language contained vital elements not found in written language.

¹⁰Province, p. 51. ¹¹Humboldt, p. 280.

¹²J[oshua] Wh[almough], "Humboldt, Wilhelm von," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1963 ed., XI, 881.

¹²J[oshua] Wh[almough], "Humboldt, Wilhelm von," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1963 ed., XI, 881.

Language and the Nation

Of the three ideas listed above, the first probably exerted the least influence upon Curry's thought. Nonetheless, Humboldt's theory of language and the national spirit does appear in Curry's writings. Humboldt had argued in his essay that "the growth of language and the growth of the spirit do not proceed parallel to one another, but absolutely and indivisibly as the same activity of the same intellectual capacity."¹³

Linguistic structure and the "spiritual characteristics" of the people who created it existed "in a relationship of such indissoluble fusion that, given one, we should be able to derive the other from it entirely." Language, Humboldt concluded,

is the external manifestation, as it were, of the spirit of a nation. Its language is its spirit and its spirit its language: one can hardly think of them as sufficiently identical.¹⁴

To speak with precision, one could not say even that a nation or race "invents" or "creates" its language. Language, he argued, was "not a work of nations but a gift given to them by their inner fate. They make use of it without knowing how they come by it."¹⁵ Furthermore, Humboldt reasoned, the greatest examples of "national spirit" were not a nation's scientific accomplishments, but rather, its art. Spirit, he concluded, expressed itself "most clearly and completely in philosophy, poetry and art."¹⁶

¹³Humboldt, pp. 276-77. ¹⁴Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 55. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 273.

The belief that literature expressed the spirit of an entire race crops up throughout Curry's work. Even in Mind and Voice, the most technical of Curry's books, he concluded that "literature and poetry are permanent embodiments of the ideas and experiences of the race." Hence, he continued, to appreciate literature fully, the reader must identify with and assimilate the "feelings of the race."¹⁷

Of greater significance to Curry's theory is Humboldt's conclusion that since linguistic structure sprang from national spirit, each different language must indicate a different kind of spirit. Thus, every nation "must also be viewed as quite separate from its outer situation, much like a human individuality which is following an inward characteristic orbit of the spirit."¹⁸

Curry, in turn, reasoned that if the different spirits

¹⁷Mind, p. 359. One of Curry's unpublished essays, "The Philosophy of Expression," contains the most detailed of Curry's many definitions of expression. Here again, he introduced Humboldt's belief that language reflected national spirit. Curry wrote: "Expression is the instinctive and artistic method by which through physiological signs of psychological states, beginning with a dumb pantomime of particulars and ending with the articulate speech of universals, the selfish isolation of transient sic rational creatures is transformed into a sympathetic and supernatural fellowship, every member of which may be enriched with the collective wealth of all the rest. Linguistic expression, oral and literary, is a common cumulative treasury for the free bestowal of all the experience of the whole race on each individual." (Delsarte Collection, Dept. of Archives, Louisiana State University Library.)

¹⁸Humboldt, p. 272.

of nations or races required different languages for their proper manifestation, they must also require different modes of expression:

Thus we see that the various changes in expression and the history of art bear a direct relation to the historical development of the character of the race. Expression in the art and oratory of Greece was different from expression in the art and oratory of to-day, and it should be so from the nature of the case. Greek expression was right for that period; it was the truthful manifestation of Greek life and character. . . . Accordingly it is very natural, in fact, inevitable, that modern expression should be different. Each age and nation must produce its own type of expression.¹⁹

Humboldt's theory provided Curry with another weapon in his attack on elocution. As a theory of oral communication, Curry concluded, elocution failed because it did not recognize that every race, every language group, must have its own mode of delivery. And the proper mode of delivery, according to Humboldt's theory, was inherent in the spirit of the race and its language. Thus, "Sheridan, one hundred and fifty years ago, contended that the English ought to have accents like the Greek, and that all inflections and modes of delivery should be uniform." This, said Curry, was "still another illustration . . . of the mistake or the failure to apprehend the difference" between the Christian and the Greek spirit.²⁰

Nor was the mode of Roman oratory any more suited to contemporary needs than the mode of Greek oratory:

¹⁹Province, p. 153. ²⁰Ibid., p. 157.

Does not this give us an explanation of the stiltedness of elocution? Has there not been an endeavor to place the rules of Quintillian [sic] and the style of Cicero upon boys who are imbued with the spirit of subjectivity and simplicity of Christian art and times? The congruity is about equal to draping a boy in his great-great-grandfather's garments and sending him in such an antiquated costume to public school.²¹

Just as Sheridan had failed to see the difference between Greek and English, Curry argued, so Austin had failed to distinguish between Latin and English. Austin, Curry claimed, had based his famous system of gestures upon Quintilian's principles, quite ignoring the fact that these principles while appropriate for the Latin language were not suited to expression in English.²²

In short, Humboldt's concept of language as an embodiment of the spirit of the race or nation influenced Curry's theory in two ways: (1) because literature represented the experience of the race, the reader must comprehend and assimilate that experience;²³ (2) because each different language reflected a different national spirit, the modes of expression of one language were not appropriate to expression in another language.²⁴

²¹Ibid., p. 158. ²²Ibid., pp. 154-55.

²³Curry believed that assimilation was an important part of imagination. See pp. 171-76 of this study.

²⁴While Curry's attack on elocution outlined above reflects Humboldt's influence, it also is indebted to the aesthetic speculations of Hegel, who emphasized philosophical and historical rather than philological distinctions among social communities. See pp. 158-64 in this study.

Language and the Individual

Humboldt's theory that the nature of language reflected the spirit or personality of the individual influenced Curry's thought even more profoundly than the philologist's belief that language reflected the spirit of the race. If in Humboldt's view language was intimately connected to the spirit of the whole nation, it was equally connected to the spirit of the individual. Language was ultimately an expression of civilization, and civilization he believed to be a product of both nation and individual: "The individual's effectiveness, regardless of the degree of his genius, endures and operates only to the extent to which it can be supported by the spirit of his nation," but at the same time, "the latter in turn receives new vitality from the creative individual."²⁵ Having determined that language related to both the individual and the community, Humboldt concluded that language was the bridge between these poles, "the mid-point in which the most diverse individualities may come together through communication of their external plans and their internal perceptions."²⁶ Though language expressed the ideas and ideals of the race, these ideas and ideals originated within the minds of the individuals.²⁷

The belief that language expressed the spirit of the individual is an idea which permeates Curry's concept of

²⁵Humboldt, p. 272. ²⁶Ibid., p. 263. ²⁷Ibid., p. 261.

expression. "Expression," he wrote, "belongs specifically and fundamentally to the living man, directly manifesting his feelings and thoughts through his organism."²⁸

From the belief that language reflected the spirit of the individual, Humboldt derived three conclusions concerning the nature of language: (1) language, though objective itself, referred to the subjective, (2) language was dynamic rather than static and (3) language revealed character.

First, Humboldt had argued that language, because it expressed the spirit of the individual, referred primarily to the subjective rather than to the objective world: "For words are born of the subjective perception of objects; they are not a copy of the object itself but of the image of it produced in the psyche by its perception."²⁹ This is not to say that language ignored objective phenomena, for the purpose of language was to objectify the inner world of the individual. Nevertheless, though language was an objectifying force, it operated from and referred to the subjective inner world of the speaker:

For language is objective and independent to precisely the same degree that it is subjective and dependent. For it has no abiding place anywhere, not even in writing; what we called its dead part must always be newly generated in thought; it must always transfer itself alive into speech or understanding, in other

²⁸[Curry], "Practical Lessons in Vocal Expression: (1) Contrast," Expression, I (June, 1895), 28.

²⁹Humboldt, p. 293.

words become wholly transferred to the subject. But this same act of regeneration is what makes it also into an object.³⁰

Curry adopted without reservation Humboldt's first conclusion. In Province the expressionist wrote that the whole function of expression was "to secure an objective body for a subjective idea." For Curry, language "must simply form a kind of body, that the soul may be manifested."³¹

Humboldt's second conclusion was that language was a dynamic process rather than a static work. Because language referred to the inner life or spirit of the individual as opposed to the objective world, he reasoned, the immediate referent of language was not a static object but a dynamic force. Language itself, therefore, was not static but dynamic, or in Humboldt's words: "Language is not a work (ergon) but an activity (energeia)."³²

Curry also borrowed this conclusion from Humboldt. In Lessons he declared:

Vocal expression is the most subjective and spontaneous form of art; it is the most immediate manifestation of thought and feeling. It does not represent products, but manifests processes; . . . it is the out-breaking of the life of the soul.³³

Humboldt's conclusion that language sprang from mental activity provided Curry with one more argument in his attempt to prove

³⁰Ibid., pp. 297-98.

³¹Province, p. 128.

³²Humboldt, p. 280.

³³Lessons, p. 3.

that expression could be studied only in conjunction with the mental processes which produced it.³⁴

Humboldt arrived at his final conclusion concerning language as follows. If language was the revelation of the inner spiritual nature of man, he reasoned, language might be said to reveal the character or the whole personality of the individual who used it, since a man's character was the sum total of his inner spiritual nature:

Configurations of spiritual energy . . . are found notably in the formation of his character. . . . The totality of the inner appearance of a person, his sensations, his sentiments, are joined to his outer appearance which radiates them.³⁵

Humboldt's belief that language revealed the character of the speaker echoes throughout Curry's theory of expression. Thus, in Province Curry insisted that "man's living languages in their complex relationship . . . reveal the character and soul of the man . . . more directly and more adequately than any form of human art."³⁶

In short, both Humboldt and Curry believed that language expressed the inner man. Therefore, they insisted, language gave objective form to the subjective world. Furthermore, both men regarded language as a process rather than a product, since the spiritual energy which created language was not an act but

³⁴This point is developed in greater detail in the chapter on psychology in this study.

³⁵Humboldt, p. 262.

³⁶Province, pp. 77-78.

an activity, not an objective thing but a subjective force. Ultimately or perhaps ideally, language, when it revealed the full spiritual activity of the individual, represented the revelation of character.

II. The Languages of Intellect and Emotion

Although Curry's discussion of the languages of intellect and emotion finds a basis in Humboldt's philology, this discussion frequently develops in detail ideas that are only hinted at in Humboldt. What relevant ideas Curry could have derived from Humboldt would have come from the latter's discussion of the spoken word and written word.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Curry quoted Humboldt in order to demonstrate that the written word was only a "mummy-like embalming" of the spoken word. This was no exaggeration of Humboldt's views. For Humboldt, philology was a study of spoken not written language. Indeed, only the spoken word could truly be considered language, he insisted:

Language intrinsically lies in the act of its production in reality. . . . Its true definition can therefore only be a genetic one. For it is the ever-repetitive work of the spirit to make articulated sound capable of expressing thought. Taken directly and strictly, this is the definition of each act of speaking, but in a true and intrinsic sense one can look upon language as but the totality of all spoken utterance. For in the scattered chaos of words and rules which we customarily call language, the only thing present in reality is whatever

particulars are brought forth by individual acts of speaking.³⁷

Furthermore, Humboldt had divided spoken language into a number of elements which he did not believe existed in written language. Thus, "the expression of thought . . . begins with the first element of language: articulated sound."³⁸ Spoken language, with its multitude of elements could refer to both the world of the intellect and the world of the emotions. Articulated speech or words were vitally connected to the intellectual world, for "the incisive acuity of speech sounds is indispensable to the understanding as it grapples with a conceptualization of objects."³⁹ But the mind was stimulated by emotional factors as well, and these too found expression in spoken language. "Since intellectual endeavor does not only occupy the understanding but stimulates the entire human being, this fact too is reflected by the sound of the human voice."⁴⁰

Both these ideas, that true language was spoken language and that spoken language contained elements which reflected the intellectual and the emotional, found their ways into Curry's theory of expression. First, as a student of delivery, Curry naturally agreed with Humboldt on the superiority of the spoken over the written word. Not only did Curry share Humboldt's belief that written language was merely "mummy-like embalming,"

³⁷Humboldt, p. 280. ³⁸Ibid., p. 283.

³⁹Ibid., p. 288. ⁴⁰Ibid.

but he went on to say that "one of our ablest writers [Ralph Waldo Emerson] very beautifully and poetically says that words are fossilized poetry." Poetry, he reasoned, had to be spoken if it were to become "living language," for there were "elements of expression revealing important phases of experience that cannot possibly be recorded."⁴¹

Humboldt's second idea, that spoken language contained more important elements than written language, also received exhaustive treatment in Curry's writings. Assimilating Humboldt's theory that spoken language sprang from both intellect and emotion, Curry often spoke of two different languages which he called the language of signs and the language of symbols.⁴²

Curry discussed both these languages in Province. There he noted that "symbols" included "all words or speech forms. Verbal language being . . . equivalent symbols of ideas, can be

⁴¹Province, p. 52.

⁴²Although the distinction between natural and artificial languages existed long before Curry's time, an examination by this investigator of twenty-five nineteenth-century books on philology has failed to reveal a single instance in which sign and symbol were used to designate these two kinds of languages. The particular use which Curry made of these terms may have been original. Furthermore, in the mammoth ten volume study, A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles Founded Mainly on the Materials Collected by the Philological Society, ed. Sir James A. H. Murray et al. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1919), neither W. A. Craigie's essay, "Sign" (IX, 31-33), nor C. T. Onions' essay, "Symbol" (IX, 362-63), indicates a precedent for the particular functions Curry assigned these terms.

recorded."⁴³ A more detailed treatment of "symbols" appeared in 1915 with the publication of Smile. There Curry argued that symbols were artificial and communicated meaning only because speaker and listener had arbitrarily agreed to a referent for each symbol. Thus, "the wireless operator, on account of a universal agreement upon a symbol of three letters, can send out the vibrations which make known that a ship is in danger."⁴⁴ Furthermore, since the symbol referred to thought it was intellectual.⁴⁵ "Symbols are conventional; they stand for ideas. By them men can convey their ideas and opinions."⁴⁶

Signs, on the other hand, were the vocal and physical languages of expression. They were not artificial but natural, and their meanings were not determined arbitrarily: "The sign is natural; it is universal; it is direct; it is immediate. . . . It is a straight appeal to human instinct."⁴⁷ Furthermore, the sign was primarily subjective: "While the sign is definite, and may stand for a specific idea, a specific impression, it reveals the attitude of the man, the elements of his impressions, his experiences."⁴⁸

⁴³Province, p. 51.

⁴⁴Curry, The Smile: If You Can Do Nothing Else You Can Smile (Boston: School of Expression, 1915), p. 47. Hereafter cited as Smile.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 48.

Written language consisted of symbols alone, Curry wrote, but only spoken language could contain signs, for the latter could not be separated from a speaker. For example:

The smile in nature cannot be separated from the individual. It is never like that of the cat in Wonderland, --left, while the cat itself vanishes. Words are symbols, on the contrary, or such things as smiles with the cat gone. They may remain as a reminder only; but the sign must be full of life. The smile can never be separated from life, it never can be disconnected from its cause, it cannot be printed; art alone can truly suggest it. The smile always partakes of the life and spirit that manifests it. The smile may be vague in representing opinions or ideas, but it is not vague in its revelation of character of the human spirit. Its presentation is representative. It gives its meaning from no mere agreement among men; but by a universal law founded in the nature of things.⁴⁹

For the communication of thought, which Curry called "objective mental action," the reader or speaker used symbols or words, but for more subjective and emotional reactions or attitudes the reader used signs in the form of vocal tone and gesture.⁵⁰

Though Curry frequently spoke of signs and symbols as separate languages, he believed that both languages should function as a single organic unity in oral expression. "Can we not see that the sign is necessary to the interpretation of the symbol? Could there have been a symbol without a sign?"⁵¹ In Province Curry insisted that the separate languages of signs

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁵⁰For the term "gesture" Curry frequently substituted both "action" and "pantomime."

⁵¹Smile, p. 48.

and symbols "stand in organic unity and one can no more be compared with another than the function of the head can be compared with that of the hand."⁵²

In many of his discussions Curry organized language into signs and symbols. As noted above, however, Curry further divided signs into vocal signs and physical signs. Symbols, on the other hand, always referred to a single element, words. Therefore, to express his thoughts, the reader or speaker would use symbols or words, but to express his emotions, he would use vocal signs and physical signs. In other words, according to Curry, though the reader had but two mental activities to express, thought and emotion, he had three means of expression, words, voice and action. "The languages of the body," Curry wrote, "can be divided into three classes, each of which is given by means of a separate mechanism: verbal expression, vocal expression and pantomimic expression."⁵³

"Verbal language," he explained, "including all words or speech forms, is a language of conventional or artificial symbols. . . . It is only verbal expression that can be written in artificial signs so as to be the common property of the race."⁵⁴ "It is a language that can be recorded so as to be seen by the eye."⁵⁵

⁵²Province, p. 57.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 52-53.

"Vocal expression," on the other hand, "appeals only to the ear." Furthermore, "because it is so completely passing, or because its phenomena are so wonderfully complex and subtle," it cannot be recorded.⁵⁶

The third form of expression Curry called "pantomimic." "All the attitudes and motions of the body which manifest emotions and conditions of the soul, the permanent bearings which indicate character, belong to this form of expression."⁵⁷

Curry summarized this division of expression into separate languages as follows:

Thus when we come to study expression we find that a normal man has these three languages. It is never fair to compare one of these with another, for nature evidently intended that they should complement each other, and that no one of them should ever be substituted for the other.⁵⁸

Curry's organization of languages into words, voice, and pantomime probably did not come from Humboldt. Humboldt did, of course, recognize words or verbal expression as one element of language. He did not refer, however, to "vocal expression" as such, though he did indicate a belief in the existence of a linguistic element which referred not to thought but to feeling. This element he called "unarticulated sound":

What makes sound different from and unique among all sensuous impressions is that the ear . . . receives the impression of actual movement, . . . and that this movement or action emanates from the inmost core of a living creature--a thinking creature in

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 53. ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 56. ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 57.

the case of articulated sound, a feeling creature in the case of unarticulated sound.⁵⁹

"Pantomimic expression" figures only briefly in his essay:

For speech does not care to die away along the ground; it longs to pour forth from the lips of the speaker directly toward the recipient, to be accompanied by the expression of his eyes and countenance as well as the gesture of his hands, thus being surrounded by all the typically human aspects of human beings.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, though Humboldt was probably not the source of Curry's three-fold division of spoken language into words, tones, and actions, this division was certainly not original with Curry. Indeed, Curry had forerunners in both philology and elocution.

As early as 1842, the American philologist and poet Benjamin Taylor had observed a distinction between words and tones. In his introduction to Attractions of Language he had written:

Those to whom this subject is new, will find in it matter of curious inquiry. They will find human speech made up of sound or voice . . . and, in its passage through the mouth, wrought upon, and jointed or articulated by the tongue, teeth, lips, &c., so as to produce the various consonant sounds.⁶¹

⁵⁹Humboldt, pp. 287-88. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 289.

⁶¹Benjamin F. Taylor, Attractions of Language, or a Popular View of Natural Language in All Its Varied Displays, in the Animate and the Inanimate World; and as Corresponding with Instinct, Intelligence and Reason; A Physiological Description of the Organs of Voice; an Account of the Origin of Artificial, Spoken Language; and a Brief Analysis of Alphabetical Sounds, Intro. by Asahel C. Kendrick (Hamilton, N. Y.: J. & D. Atwood, 1842), p. 11.

The voice, unaffected by the articulators, Taylor called the "natural language" of man. The conversion of vocal tones into articulated words he called "the artificial language" of man. Furthermore, like Humboldt who had preceded him and Curry who followed, Taylor believed that natural language or tone expressed emotion, while artificial language or articulated sound expressed thought. "In the former class," he declared, speaking of vocal tones, "we find expression of fear, and exclamations of delight." Words or "artificial language," he asserted, could be considered the "language of reason."⁶²

As the nineteenth century progressed, the distinction between words and tones, only touched upon in Humboldt and Taylor, gradually moved closer to the center of philological attention. In 1873 the English philologist, John Earle, wrote in The Philology of the English Tongue:

Voice will, moreover, be found to consist of two parts, by a distinction worthy to be observed. For, in the first place, there is the voice which is the necessary vehicle of the meaning; and, in the second place, there is the voice which forms a harmonious accompaniment to the meaning.⁶³

But the first important philologist to divide language into three elements, as Curry was to do, was Frederic W. Farrar. In Chapters on Language, first issued in 1860 and than reissued

⁶²Ibid., p. 182.

⁶³John Earle, The Philology of the English Tongue (2d ed. rev.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1873), p. 577.

in 1873, Farrar distinguished among words, voice, and gesture. The first of these, he believed, served to communicate thought or intellect. The second of these elements he described as follows:

Voice, independently of the words it utters, is capable, by natural flexibility, of expressing every variation of emotion, in all degrees of intensity; and by virtue of the penetrating nerve-shaking influence of sound upon the soul, it can convey to others a sympathy with the same feelings, and the impression of a free activity. It instantly and involuntarily stirs the attention of the hearer by an energy which, like that of the soul itself, is to the highest degree varied, energetic, and effectual, yet is at the same time ideal and unseen.⁶⁴

Finally, like voice, gesture was also a language of the emotions:

In truth, gesture is a most eloquent and powerful exponent of emotion, and may add almost incredible force to the utterance of the tongue.⁶⁵

In moments of extreme passion, then, a language of gesture, a language appealing to the eye rather than the ear, is not only possible, but extremely powerful, and one which will never be entirely superseded.⁶⁶

By Curry's time, therefore, the distinction between

⁶⁴Frederic W. Farrar, Chapters on Language (2d ed.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873), p. 74. It is interesting to note how few of these possible sources for Curry's ideas on language considered themselves to be philologists by profession. Humboldt was probably best known in his own day as a statesman and literary critic. Benjamin Taylor, who published some fifteen volumes of poetry, wrote only one book on philology, and Frederic Farrar, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, gained fame chiefly from his novels and his theological tracts. Only John Earle devoted himself primarily to the study of languages.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 69.

languages of voice and gesture, which reflected emotion, and verbal language, which reflected intellect, had frequently appeared in philological literature.

Curry, however, made reference to no philologists other than Humboldt. It is possible, therefore, that he derived his concept of the three languages of expression from sources outside philology. As early as the first century Cicero had written that "every passion of the heart" had "its appropriate look, and tone, and gesture."⁶⁷ Over a hundred years before Curry began writing, the British elocutionist, Thomas Sheridan, had observed:

It will be necessary to recollect, that we have in use two different kinds of language, which have no sort of affinity between them, but what custom has established; and which are communicated thro' different organs: the one, thro' the eye, by means of written characters; the other, thro' the ear, by means of articulate sounds and tones.⁶⁸

Finally, Curry may have derived his views on words, tones, and action directly from his studies under Steele MacKaye. Curry's personal papers contain a lecture by Steele MacKaye in which MacKaye noted:

In analyzing Human Expressions we find that man has three distinct modes of manifesting what he feels,

⁶⁷Cicero, De Oratore, quoted in Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁸Thomas Sheridan, A Course of Lectures on Elocution; Together with Two Dissertations on Language; and Some Other Tracts Relative to Those Subjects (2d ed. rev.; Dublin: Samuel Whyte, 1764), pp. 23-24.

thinks, and loves.

First by Cries--that is inarticulate tones of the voice. Second by Speech--that is articulation or the artificial formation of sounds into words. Third, by Pantomime--that is by the Attitudes of his Body--the Gestures of his limbs, and the Expressions of his Face. These three languages--Tone, Speech, and Pantomime each cooperate with the others to give complete expression to our inward life.⁶⁹

Furthermore, MacKaye's lecture also describes "Speech," or what Curry termed "verbal expression," as a reflection of the intellectual activity of the speaker:

Articulation or Speech on the other hand is the product of our Reflective Faculties. Speech manifest [sic] especially Thought--and is its outward form, just as Thought is always inward Speech.⁷⁰

Like Curry, MacKaye conceived of the other two languages, tone and pantomime, as referring to man's subjective emotional activities.⁷¹

III. Summary

Curry's extensive discussions of language reflect a considerable debt to nineteenth-century philology and to the philological speculation of certain elocutionists.

Curry's concept of language is closest to that of Wilhelm von Humboldt whom Curry frequently quoted. From Humboldt Curry could have borrowed three concepts: (1) that language reflected the spirit of the nation or race that used

⁶⁹The Delsarte Collection, Dept. of Archives, Louisiana State University Library.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

it, (2) that language reflected the spirit or personality of the individual who used it, and (3) that the spoken word was more important than the written word.

Because Curry was primarily interested in oral expression and not language itself, he adapted Humboldt's tenets to suit his own purposes. Thus, Curry used Humboldt's first concept, that language reflected the national spirit, to invalidate several elocutionary theories which had preceded his own theory of oral expression. For example, Curry argued that Sheridan's theory of elocution was invalid because it sought to apply to English a style of delivery suited only to the classical Greek language. As Greek and English reflected different national spirits, Curry insisted, they demanded different theories of expression. Using much the same line of reasoning, Curry attacked Gilbert Austin, arguing that Austin was attempting to apply Roman elocutionary techniques to problems of communication in modern English.

Curry was more profoundly influenced by Humboldt's second concept, that language reflected the spirit or personality of the individual who used it. For Curry, as for Humboldt, this characteristic of language justified three conclusions about language.

First, language referred to the subjective world of the individual. To Curry's mind this first conclusion of Humboldt meant that the function of oral expression was to communicate the inner subjective world of the speaker. Expression, therefore,

referred not to the objective world but to the impressions the objective world made upon the speaker.

Second, Humboldt had concluded, language was not a product but a process since it sprang from the psychic activity of the speaker. Curry, in turn, found important implications in this conclusion. Since language was dynamic rather than static, he reasoned, and since it sprang from psychic activity, the use of language in oral expression must be studied in conjunction with psychic activity. Furthermore, any attempt to isolate expression from psychic activity by making the speaker deliberately control his delivery was invalid. "These actions of the voice which in nature are always free and constantly varying according to the spontaneous effect of the process of the mind in thinking and feeling," he argued, could not be "made fixed and subject to rule."⁷²

Third, Humboldt had insisted, language revealed the speaker's character. Curry, applying Humboldt's conclusion to oral expression, concluded that delivery revealed character.

The final aspect of Curry's theory of language involves his distinction between the language of intellect and the language of emotion. Curry believed that oral expression sought to communicate both the thought and the emotion of the speaker. Thoughts, he insisted, were communicated by words, which were the

⁷²Lessons, p. 3.

artificial and arbitrary tools of the speaker. Emotions, on the other hand, were communicated by vocal tone and bodily activity. Vocal tone and bodily activity were the natural tools of the speaker.

To distinguish between these artificial and natural tools, Curry introduced the terms "symbol" and "sign." Thus in Curry's theory, the speaker used symbols to communicate his thoughts and signs to communicate his feelings.

Curry's subdivision of "signs" into vocal and bodily activity tends to complicate his theory. On the one hand, Curry argued, the speaker communicated two mental processes, thought and emotion. But on the other hand, the speaker used three devices to express this thought and emotion. These devices were words, voice, and bodily action.

Curry's use of "sign" and "symbol" to designate the languages of emotion and thought appears to have been original. His division of delivery into words, voice, and action, however, was not original. Though Curry did not indicate the source of his three-fold division, both philologists and elocutionists who preceded him had also divided language into words, tones and actions.

In philology even Humboldt had touched upon words, unarticulated sound and physical expression. As early as 1842 Benjamin Taylor had observed that vocal tones referred to the speaker's emotional state while articulated words were the "language of reason." In 1860 and again in 1873 Frederic Farrar

had introduced the same three-fold division of spoken language as Curry was to do, and furthermore, he had related words to intellectual activity and tone and gesture to emotional activity.

If Curry was indebted to any of these philologists after Humboldt, he never indicated this fact. Consequently, he may have gleaned his ideas from elocutionists. One of these elocutionists, Steele MacKaye, had actually been Curry's teacher for several years, and the similarity between MacKaye's and Curry's treatments of language suggests that the teacher may have exerted some influence upon his pupil.

CHAPTER IV

CURRY'S DEBT TO PSYCHOLOGY

Curry's theory of expression reflects to a considerable extent the influence of nineteenth-century psychology. As was the case with philology, however, Curry generally preferred speculative, philosophical treatments of psychology to the more technical discussions which were beginning to appear in nineteenth-century psychological literature. Thus, while Curry made no reference to the work of pioneer experimentalists such as Wilhelm Wundt, he continually referred his readers to the psychological speculations of men like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the German metaphysician, Hermann Lotze.

Nonetheless, psychology exerted a strong influence on Curry. The Province of Expression, as well as Curry's later writings, abounds with quotations from and references to psychological theory. Nor did this influence function peripherally in Curry's theory of expression. Instead, it provided the cornerstone of that theory.

This chapter seeks to explain Curry's theory of expression in the light of psychological literature which influenced Dr. Curry. In particular, this chapter stresses the

influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Alexander Bain, Herbert Spencer, and Hermann Lotze on Curry's theory of expression.

To a large extent this chapter has as its purpose to explain how Curry arrived at the concept of expression which he presented in the first volume of Expression magazine. There Curry wrote:

Beginning with perception, there is a complete circle through which all mental life normally passes. The circle involves the whole nature,--an imaginative realization of the new perception, an outflowing stimulation of memories, a discriminating attention to the multitude of ideas appealing for recognition, a personal and emotional coloring of the whole experience, a focusing of the attention in a definite direction and upon a definite idea, an act inevitably sequent upon the intensely conceived idea to which the attention has been given. Action implies thought, while thought normally results in action,--inevitably results in some action. A given act, indeed, is only one part of the response of the body to the outgoing impulse of thought. This, the normal round of life, is in real experience not capable of separation into distinct elements, but exists as a whole.¹

Curry devoted The Province of Expression to a discussion of the general nature of expression with particular emphasis upon the points of difference between expression and other theories of communication. "Returning now to the simplest and most direct study of the problem," he wrote, "we find that expression is a product of nature. Every product implies cause, means and effect."²

¹[Curry], "The Teaching of English Composition," Expression, III (September, 1897), 409.

²Province, p. 207.

I. Cause

Of these three factors of expression Curry's treatment of cause reflects to the greatest extent the influence of psychology. For Curry expression was the natural result of "psychic" or mental activity,³ and he divided mental activity into three elements or faculties: intellect or cognition, will or volition, and emotion or feeling:

Now from this analysis we can see that the normal process of expression requires first, an intellectual element. The mind sees the idea, grasps the situation, and then the feelings normally respond to this idea. Emotions awakened by the successive objects and situations upon which the attention is focussed are regulated and often restrained by will, and these diffuse themselves through the whole body and cause a response in the very texture of the muscles; so that the color of the voice and all the subtle actions of the body are awakened by these internal impulses.⁴

In actuality, however, Curry was able to isolate for discussion only the faculty of intellect. Aside from his discussion of the limitations of the faculty of volition in Province, Curry always treated volition and emotion together. Consequently, this section divides Curry's discussion of mental action into three parts: (1) The Functions of Intellect, (2) The Limitations of Volition, and (3) The Functions of Volition and Emotion.

³Ibid., p. 207.

⁴Ibid., p. 92. From whom Curry borrowed this view of the mind is difficult to determine with any precision. In Province he noted that "Kant first distinguished the nature of emotion from cognition" (p. 189). Curry's three-fold division of the mind was popular among psychologists and philosophers throughout the nineteenth century.

The Functions of Intellect

Not until Lessons in Vocal Expression, published four years after Province, did Curry present a full discussion of the operation of the intellect. In Lessons Curry borrowed his description of intellect not from the psychologists of his own day but from the psychological speculations of an aesthete, Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

To explain how the mind operated in thinking, Curry referred his readers to Coleridge's belief that the stream of consciousness was like a "small water insect on the surface of rivulets, which . . . wins its way up against the stream by alternate pulses of active and passive motion."⁵ Curry found Coleridge's analogy to be apt. "In musing," he noted, "the mind drifts" from one idea to another, but "in thinking, however, there is an accentuation of successive pulsations." Curry believed that thought occurred whenever the mind concentrated upon a single idea, placing all others in the background, and then deliberately moved on to another related idea. "The prolonging of the concentration of the mind upon an idea is called 'attention.'"⁶

Curry then applied Coleridge's description of the mind

⁵Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, quoted in Lessons, p. 18.

⁶Lessons, p. 19.

to the process of reading a poem. "If we read a simple poem or story to ourselves," he wrote, "the mind forms one image, then another, so that there is a series of ideas." These ideas in turn "awaken the impulses of the soul in proportion to the degree of concentration, length of attention, upon each idea in succession." The progressive transitions of the mind, he concluded, determined "the apprehension or realization of the thought of the poem."⁷

Having described the actions of the mind when a person reads to himself, Curry then turned to the problem of reading to others. Here, he insisted, the actions of the mind remained basically the same, though the task of communicating to others would require the reader to exaggerate those actions slightly. "Expression does not call for a change in the actions of the mind, but simply for accentuation." In reading aloud, then, the reader would pause longer, holding each idea before the mind for a greater period of time.⁸

Attractive as Coleridge's theory of the intellect was to Curry, the latter also borrowed ideas from his contemporary, Herbert Spencer. Coleridge had described the actions of the mind in thinking as a series of irregular pulsations or leaps, much like the action of a waterbug as it wins its way upstream. In First Principles Spencer modified without contradicting Coleridge's

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., pp. 19-20.

analogy by describing the actions of the mind as rhythmical. Spencer began his discussion by admitting that "it is not manifest that the changes of consciousness are in any sense rhythmical." Nonetheless, "analysis proves . . . that the mental state existing at any moment is not uniform, but is decomposable into rapid oscillations."⁹

Though a person might not be conscious of it, the mind was continually experiencing a rapid rhythmical process. "There is going on an extremely rapid departure from, and return to, that particular mental state which we regard as persistent." To prove his point, Spencer turned to physiology. Since mental sensations "expend themselves" by producing a "discharge" along the motor nerves, and since physiologists had discovered such discharges to be rhythmical rather than continuous, Spencer concluded that the mental activity producing the "discharge" must also be rhythmical.

A continuous discharge along the nerve leading to a muscle does not contract it: a broken discharge is required--a rapid succession of shocks. Hence muscular contraction presupposes that rhythmic state of consciousness which direct observation discloses.¹⁰

Spencer made a number of specific applications of his general observation, and among these is his explanation of poetry.

⁹Herbert Spencer, First Principles (New York: The DeWitt Revolving Fund, Inc., 1958), p. 268.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 268-69.

"Poetry is a form of speech which results when the emphasis is regularly recurrent"; i.e., "when the muscular effort of pronunciation has definite periods of greater and less intensity--periods that are complicated with others of like nature answering to the successive verses."¹¹

Thus, Spencer determined that the action of the mind in thinking was rhythmical by introspective examination of the thought process and by observation of neural stimuli to the body. Furthermore, he used his theory of rhythm to explain the particular attraction of poetry to mankind.

Since Curry made no direct reference to Spencer's First Principles, there is no certainty that he was familiar with it. On the other hand, in Province, Mind and Voice, and Expression magazine Curry did refer to Spencer's "Origins and Function of Music," which first appeared in Fraser's Magazine in 1857. There, Spencer again introduced his concept of rhythm, using it not only to explain the appeal of poetry but also that of dance and music:

And when we bear in mind that dancing, poetry, and music are connate--are originally constituent parts of the same thing, it becomes clear that the measured movement common to them all implies a rhythmical action of the whole system, the vocal apparatus included; and that the rhythm of music is a more subtle and complex result of this relation between mental and muscular excitement.¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 269-70.

¹²Herbert Spencer, Essays Scientific, Political, and Speculative (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1910), II, 413.

Given Coleridge's description of the pulsations of the mind in thought and Spencer's discussion of the rhythmical actions of the mind, Curry felt that he was psychologically equipped to make direct applications to the needs of the oral reader.

He began by introducing the concept of pause. "As the mind thinks by pulsation, by rhythmic leaps, by action and re-action, so speech must have the same characteristics."¹³ Just as the mind stopped for a moment and then proceeded to the next idea so should the oral reader. Pause, then, was determined not by any external factors, such as grammatical rules, but rather, by the psychological nature of the mind. "A pause is not a mechanical thing."¹⁴ "Pause, touch, or any other of the vocal modulations, can be mastered only by a direct study of the process of thinking."¹⁵

Having established that the pause was psychological in nature by showing "that the mind receives the idea before giving it, that 'impression precedes expression,'"¹⁶ Curry next dealt with the periods of utterance which occur between the pauses. These utterances, he said, represented the expression of the impression made on the mind during the pause. Every true utterance was, therefore, a "manifestation of a conception,"¹⁷

¹³Lessons, p. 62.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵Curry, Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible, with an intro. by Francis G. Peabody (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903), p. 151. Hereafter cited as Bible.

¹⁶Lessons, p. 64.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 73.

which Curry designated as a "phrase." The elements of the phrase were words, but words had meaning only as they combined into phrases to express single ideas:

Let us note now the effect of the action of the mind upon words. As we compare words with a sequence of ideas, we find that every word is not a manifestation of a conception. The phrase 'in the calm sunset,' has three sic words, but only one picture rises in the mind.¹⁸

Furthermore, Curry insisted, the longer the pause, the longer the mind contemplated the single idea of each phrase, the greater "the vividness of that idea."¹⁹

Since both pause and phrase were the effects of mental action, Curry reasoned, they could not be taught by rules based upon grammar, punctuation, or any other point of reference short of the mind itself. "Such half truths crystallized into rules are fatal to naturalness and simplicity."²⁰

Curry ended his discussion of phrasing by returning to Spencer's "Origin and Function of Music." There, Spencer advanced the belief that language had begun with single exclamatory sounds. To these single sounds man gradually added modifying sounds, thus producing primitive phrases. For Curry, Spencer's theory on the evolution of language proved conclusively that the phrase, though composed of several words, expressed but a single

¹⁸Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 74.

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.

thought.²¹

Not only did Curry rely in part on Coleridge for an explanation of how the mind proceeded from thought to thought, but Curry also borrowed Coleridge's explanation of how the mind arranged a number of ideas into central and subordinate positions. Both Coleridge and Curry referred to this process as "method." While Curry discussed "method" in several of his texts, his explanation of it in Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible is perhaps the clearest and most concise of his numerous treatments:

Not only is there in every phrase a central idea and word, but in every sentence or paragraph there is one point more important than all others. In fact, in a whole address or Scripture Lesson, a single idea can be found to which all others are related or subordinated.²²

For Curry thinking implied two processes: (1) the concentration of the mind upon each individual idea and (2) "method" or the subordination of a number of lesser ideas to a single central thought. In "method" the mind chooses carefully "the direction in which it is to go, and gives vital connection of idea with idea."²³

In an earlier book Curry had devoted a chapter to "Method of Thought and Words." There he presented a six-page condensation

²¹Curry, Mind and Voice: Principles and Methods in Vocal Training (Boston: Expression Co., 1910), p. 60. Hereafter cited as Mind.

²²Bible, p. 167.

²³Ibid.

of Coleridge's essay, "Method," in The Friend.²⁴ Curry attributed his own understanding of "method" largely to Coleridge's discussion:

An important characteristic of a logical mind, and a mark of true culture, has been shown by Coleridge to be "The unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of words, that are grounded in the habit of foreseeing in each integral part, or in every sentence, the whole that he intends to communicate."²⁵

In short, Curry based his concept of the intellectual faculty of the mind upon the psychological theories of Coleridge and Spencer. Curry viewed the thinking process as a series of rhythmic pulsations or movements from one idea to the next. These pulsations or rhythms were directly manifested by the voice as a series of pauses and phrases. In addition to this first action of the mind, Curry also discussed "method," by which he meant the intellectual process of determining the relative importance of ideas and the central idea of any passage.

Limitations of the Will

In Province Curry began his discussion of will by noting that "in man we meet with elements which are not found in the plant or animal."²⁶ One of these elements, Curry explained,

²⁴Lessons, pp. 129-35. Aside from selections for drill, this is the longest single quotation to be found in Curry's published works.

²⁵Bible, p. 167.

²⁶Province, p. 184.

"is volition. The plant has no control over its environment. The animal has little if any, while man can change or dominate his surroundings, whether subjective or objective."²⁷ With these words Curry introduced his description of the second faculty of the mind, volition or will. In no other book did Curry treat this subject so exhaustively or apply his interpretation of volition so assiduously to the nature of expression as in Province.

Curry began his discussion of the will with the following quotation from the German philosopher and psychologist, Hermann Lotze: "It is not always . . . that movements proceed from our will."²⁸ Lotze's speculations on volition deeply impressed Curry, and the treatment of volition in Province reflects Lotze's influence. This section briefly summarizes Lotze's discussion of the will and then shows how Curry applied Lotze's conclusions to his own speculations.

It is not surprising that Lotze's ideas were attractive to Curry. Though many of Lotze's writings were strictly scientific, he had devoted his career to "the reconciliation of science with art, literature and religion."²⁹ Though Lotze's first book on psychology appeared in 1852 (Medizinische

²⁷Ibid., pp. 184-85.

²⁸Ibid., p. 188.

²⁹C[ecil] A[lec] Ma[re], "Lotze, Rudolf Hermann," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1965 ed., XIV, 407.

Psychologie oder Physiologie der Seele), his fame as a nineteenth-century psychologist rests largely on his Metaphysik, which did not appear until 1879.³⁰

Lotze's principal concern in the third book of his Metaphysic, entitled Psychology, was to show that volition was limited in its powers. Lotze began by asserting that the mind or "soul" was often incapable of producing physical reactions without external stimulus:

The soul cannot always produce of itself the efficient primary state that would recreate the movement: sometimes this movement demands, for its repetition, the complete reproduction of the corporeal stimulus from which it sprang originally as a true reflex movement.³¹

As proof of his theory Lotze called attention to the phenomena of sneezing and vomiting. One could not, he insisted, induce these states by the will. Instead, some outside stimulus had to be present.³²

Lotze then turned his attention to the chain of events which occurred when sufficient external stimulus was presented to the mind to produce physical reactions. Lotze called the first link in this chain "the starting-point which the soul must produce in order that the motor mechanism may execute exactly that movement which at the given instant answers to the physical

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Hermann Lotze, Metaphysic in Three Books: Ontology, Cosmology, and Psychology, ed. and trans. by Bernard Bosanquet (2d ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1887), II, 298.

³²Ibid.

intention."³³ Once this psychic stimulus was present, Lotze explained, the body would react, but the connection between psychic stimulus and physical reaction could not be explained in terms of volition.³⁴ Ultimately, Lotze concluded, volition or the will had little to do with the physical manifestation of psychic phenomena:

When the soul then reproduces within itself these starting-points, they proceed, without any further interference or knowledge on its part, and in obedience to a mechanism which was not invented by us and remains concealed from us, to produce as a final result the actual movement.³⁵

As further support for his theory Lotze called the reader's attention to those physical actions caused by emotion and intellect. If one removed the natural causes of these mental states and substituted sheer will power, the physical actions normally resulting from them would be difficult if not impossible to reproduce:

The fact remains that, wherever this feeling is diminished or disappears, we find it difficult or impossible to execute movements, the idea of which is none the less present to consciousness, as the idea of a task to be accomplished.³⁶

Because of these facts (and here the reason for Curry's interest is apparent), "the familiar facts of bodily expression and gesture" constituted "an endowment due to nature, and not to our invention." The external signs of expression were really

³³Ibid., II, 299.

³⁴Ibid., II, 300.

³⁵Ibid., II, 300-01.

³⁶Ibid., II, 304.

"involuntary manifestations of its internal psychical states, which the soul simply witnesses without willing them."³⁷

Due to the influence of Lotze, Curry began his own discussion of volition not with a description of its powers but with a treatment of its limitations. Any theory based upon the belief that the manifestations of expression might be controlled by the will, he concluded,

overlooks the number and complexity of the elements of expression. . . . They can never be produced by deliberative, conscious action of will in all the plenitude of nature. To endeavor to do so has always made them artificial and unnatural, and the expression mechanical.³⁸

Because he accepted the validity of Lotze's theory, Curry rejected all methods of teaching delivery which sought to make that process subservient to the will.

Such a course is not in accord with the action of the mind in conversation. If a man in conversation is ever conscious of the inflections, stresses and above all, of the color of his voice, it is in a very secondary way, and is generally caused by ill-health or some misuse of the mechanism. Normally the mind must ever be centered upon its train of ideas, and any art that prevents this is false to nature and will end in superficiality.³⁹

Instead, Curry sought a method for teaching delivery which would

not depend upon a few artificial conditions of pitch and stress and inflection, but upon an infinite complexity of modulations which can never be completely

³⁷Ibid., II, 299.

³⁸Province, p. 189.

³⁹Ibid., p. 318.

reproduced by any conscious or deliberative process.⁴⁰

The consequences of Lotze's influence on Curry were significant. Curry, by specific application of Lotze's theory to expression, was able to draw clear-cut lines between his own theory and that of the major figures of the elocutionary movement. Thanks to Lotze, Curry and his followers could consider themselves as pioneers in the movement against elocution, which emphasized the role of volition in expression. Their methods of teaching represented in their own eyes not an extension or development of elocution but a "new mode or method."⁴¹ The central position of Lotze's views in the expressionist's attack on elocution is nowhere more apparent than in Curry's description of the contrast between expression and elocution:

Elocution . . . will seek to make all conscious and deliberative. . . . Expression . . . will endeavor to translate all knowledge into instinct, that the man in all good speaking may be free from the mechanical shackles of artificial rules.⁴²

The Functions of Volition and Emotion

If Curry relied on Lotze for his explanation of the limitations of volition, the expressionist turned to quite a different source for his understanding of the function of volition. For this Curry relied upon the investigations of the English associational psychologist, Alexander Bain. It

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 319. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 380.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 380-81.

would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Bain's influence on Curry. Not only did Curry refer repeatedly in Province to Bain's work, but in his later discussions of expression, particularly Lessons, Bible and Foundations, Curry emphasized the relevance of Bain's investigations to the needs of the oral reader.

Of Bain's three major works on psychology, The Senses and the Intellect, The Emotions and the Will and Mind and Body,⁴³ the last two played particularly significant roles in Curry's theory of expression.⁴⁴ As the titles of Bain's books indicate, he discussed the faculty of the intellect in a separate book, but like Curry, he found emotion and will to be so interrelated that he could not separate them, even for the purpose of analysis. Actually, Bain was unhappy with any views of the mind which conceived of its faculties as separable. Though he agreed that the mind had three different faculties, yet "no one could subsist alone. . . . In tracing out the bodily accompaniments of mind . . . we may expect to find certain great laws pervading

⁴³Bain's books were readily accessible to Curry. The Senses and the Intellect first appeared in 1855 and went through four editions by 1894. The Emotions and the Will, which first appeared in 1859, also went through four editions by 1899. Mind and Body went through five editions from 1873 to 1876.

⁴⁴Bain's influence was probably direct as Curry quoted from both The Emotions and the Will and Mind and Body. See Province, pp. 246-47.

the whole."⁴⁵

The same approach characterizes Curry's discussions of the mental faculties. Much of Province is given over to asserting that the mental faculties operated not separately but in organic unity with each other. "Expression," he asserted,

must seem to be the result and co-ordination of all the faculties and powers of the soul. . . . With only the intellect active, there can be no great expression, nor can there be great expression with only the emotions active, or with only the will active.⁴⁶

Accordingly, this section treats both volition and emotion not only as they interrelate but also as they unite with the intellect.

In Curry's scheme emotion actually began with the faculty of intellect. "The normal process of expression requires first, an intellectual element," he wrote in Province. "The mind sees the idea, grasps the situation, and then the feelings normally respond to this idea."⁴⁷ This belief echoes throughout Curry's writings: "In true natural expression, the attention of the mind upon an idea awakens a conception; the conception awakens emotion."⁴⁸ "True feeling is a response to knowledge."⁴⁹ "All genuine thinking awakens feeling."⁵⁰ Curry's

⁴⁵Alexander Bain, Mind and Body: The Theories of Their Relation (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), p. 44.

⁴⁶Province, p. 179. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁸Lessons, p. 36. ⁴⁹Imagination, p. 152.

⁵⁰Foundations, p. 149.

belief in the intellectual origin of emotion is directly traceable to Bain's The Emotions and the Will. There Bain insisted that "feelings as such--pleasures, pains, and neutral excitement--are always incorporated with intellectual states, and, by that means, are differentiated, held, sustained, and revived."⁵¹ Later in the same book he stated this theory even more forcefully. "The origin or first source of the sympathetic and disinterested impulses of our nature," he insisted, "is in a very great degree intellectual."⁵²

Having established the intellectual starting point of emotion, Curry next asserted that emotions could not rise simply from the rapid succession of ideas along the thought stream or "musing." Instead, it was necessary, "that the mind be called away from wandering fancies, from conflicting ideas, and become concentrated upon a central idea."⁵³

Furthermore, "the more vivid and adequate the conception of the speaker, the greater the emotion, and the more intense the feeling, the more real are the ideas."⁵⁴ For the oral interpreter the requirement of concrete perception for emotional stimulation posed definite problems, Curry warned. The reader's intellect first had to be stimulated, and this stimulus could come only from the poem being read. If the poem was to be

⁵¹Alexander Bain, The Emotions and the Will (3d ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1876), p. 91. Hereafter cited as Emotions.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 120-21. ⁵³Lessons, p. 39. ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 28.

emotionally realized, then the reader had to perceive it concretely.

For Curry concrete perception depended upon awareness of "situation." Thus, to stimulate emotion the oral reader had to supply the "situation" in which the poem takes place: "From these illustrations it may be seen that feeling depends upon situation; that with every change of situation there is a change in emotion."⁵⁵

Curry's remarks on emotion reflect two basic assumptions. First, where the intellect originated in an external stimulus (e.g. for the interpreter, a poem), emotion arose from an act of the intellect. Second, unlike the intellect, which might pass rapidly from idea to idea in musing, emotions took longer to arise and required that the mind hold to a single idea or conception for

⁵⁵Imagination, p. 90. Curry did not believe that intellect alone could make the reader concretely aware of "situation." The full realization of "situation," he insisted, required a fourth faculty, imagination. Curry, however, denied that psychology had made any significant contribution to our understanding of the faculty of imagination (Imagination, p. 24). Instead, Curry usually relied upon aestheticians for his concept of this faculty. Consequently, the full discussion of imagination appears in the chapter on Curry's aesthetic sources. Nonetheless, psychologists were investigating the imagination in Curry's time. Bain devoted some eleven pages to it in The Senses and the Intellect (3d ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1872), pp. 599-609, and James gave over a complete chapter to its consideration (William James, The Principles of Psychology [New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1890], II, 44-75.). These psychological treatments do not conform to Curry's concept of imagination, however. They are closer to what Curry chose to call "fancy." See Imagination, pp. 52-55.

a greater period of time. Both these assumptions were overtly stated by Bain.

The Emotions, as such, have certain mental peculiarities, . . . all which peculiarities result from the description of them already given. In the first place, they rise more slowly, attain to a greater volume, and subside more gradually. . . . Instead of manifesting themselves at once on an external stimulus, they wait a series of internal movements and transitions, which occupy more time and take a greater sweep in the circles of the brain.⁵⁶

Like Bain, Curry not only associated emotion with intellect, but he associated it with volition as well. If, as Lotze asserted, the will had little to do with the physical aspects of expression or the means, it was vital in the operations of the psychic aspect of expression or the cause. Unfettered, the mind would "rest a moment upon one thing, then leap to another, according to the law of association of ideas."⁵⁷ But if the mind was to produce emotion, some force had to resist the near inexorable pull of association, arresting the constant flux of ideas and concentrating the consciousness upon a single idea until emotional perception was realized. This force, Curry said, was the will:

The will is ever present. It holds the mind upon the ideas, it retains the impulses which otherwise would fly off too quickly and nervously, until

⁵⁶Bain, Emotions, p. 70.

⁵⁷Lessons, p. 18.

they diffuse themselves through the whole man.⁵⁸

The actions of volition resulted in "attention" or "the prolonging of the concentration of the mind upon an idea."⁵⁹

Once again, Curry's conception of the role of volition paralleled that of Alexander Bain. In the first place Bain conceived of volition as the force which stopped the ceaseless motion of the intellect in the act of musing. Without volition,

⁵⁸Province, pp. 192-93.

⁵⁹Lessons, p. 19. At this point Curry quoted the psychologist, William James: "Professor James has shown that even in holding the attention of the mind upon the simplest object, there is . . . rhythmic pulsation." Despite this quotation the influence of James upon Curry's theory of expression is not profound. Though Curry quoted James on attention, the two men arrived at quite different conclusions. Curry attributed attention to the restraining action of the will on the stream of thought. James, on the other hand, saw no such connection between will and attention. He quoted Helmholtz to the effect that will was related to attention only incidentally, and then went on to add: "These words of Helmholtz are of fundamental importance. And if true of sensorial attention, how much more true are they of the intellectual variety." (James, I, 423.)

Even more pointed are the contrasting views of emotion entertained by Curry and James. Curry, like Bain, believed that the emotions originated in the mind. James, contrariwise, held a quite different position: "My theory, on the contrary, is that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion." (James, II, 449-50.)

The lack of Jamesian influence reflected by Curry's theory of expression is understandable for Curry first became interested in expression in 1872 (see S. S. Curry, "Delsarte and MacKaye," The Voice, VII [March, 1885], 42-44). Furthermore, he began work on Province as early as 1881 (see Province, p. vi). By the time James' Principles of Psychology first appeared in 1890, Curry had been teaching for some eighteen years, and his theory was undoubtedly well crystallized.

he declared, the stream of thoughts was "constantly tossed about . . . in a multitude of directions."⁶⁰

Second, Bain identified the cause of this ceaseless motion of the intellect as the law of association, and accordingly, ranged will against association: "In the case now supposed, the force of the will is set in array against a power of a different sort, the power of the intellectual associations."⁶¹

Third, Bain, like Curry, referred to the effect of volition upon intellect as "attention." "What the will can do is fix the Attention." Thanks to the power of volition, "in mental attention, we can fix one idea firmly in the view, while others are coming and going unheeded."⁶²

Finally, Bain provided psychological validity for Curry's belief that the volition of the interpreter gave him the ability to call up and suppress emotional excitation within himself. Thanks to the influence of volition upon intellect, "we are to some extent able to bring out the play of . . . passions by directing the mind upon their objects, or causes."⁶³

For Curry there still remained the problem of explaining how the reader converted the emotion he had created into physical reactions perceivable by an audience. As a disciple of Lotze, Curry could not explain the process by volition. The

⁶⁰Bain, Emotions, p. 445. ⁶¹Ibid., pp. 374-75.

⁶²Ibid., p. 370. ⁶³Ibid., p. 377.

solution lay once again in Bain's psychology:

Note, for example, the law of diffusion as stated by Bain: "When an impression is accompanied with feeling, the aroused currents diffuse themselves freely over the brain, leading to a general agitation of the moving organs, as well as affecting the viscera."⁶⁴

The process whereby emotional excitation automatically produced physical or bodily activity Bain called "the law of Diffusion." All the actions of the body in expression, he insisted, were caused by this law:

I here quote the facts relative to the still more general circumstance--Diffusion, as attending all feelings alike.

The organs first and prominently affected, in the diffused wave of nervous influence, are the moving members, and of these, by preference, the features of the face (with the ears in animals), whose movements constitute the expression of the countenance.⁶⁵

For Curry the chain of stimulus-intellection-volition-emotion was not yet complete, however. The will had one final function to perform. Having stimulated emotion within himself, the reader had to control that emotion. This represented the second office of the will: the harnessing of the emotions once they had been stimulated.

The . . . conception of the scene, situation or character . . . sympathetically awakens passion which diffuses itself over the body and tends at once to action; but the will resists the action, thus reserving the emotion

⁶⁴Province, p. 246.

⁶⁵Bain, Emotions, p. 4.

till it becomes intense and dominates the whole man.⁶⁶

In fact, Curry commented, when the will restrained and controlled the emotion, it simultaneously intensified the emotion, thereby increasing the effect on "the muscular texture in the action of the whole body."⁶⁷ Later Curry observed: "It is the amount of feeling . . . controlled by the will for a purpose, which stirs the soul [of the audience]."⁶⁸

In short, Curry believed that the actions of the mind were the cause of all vocal expressions. From his readings in psychology he conceived of mental action as the unified result of three faculties: intellect, volition, and emotion. Volition, by forcing the intellect to concentrate upon each idea until it was vividly conceived, produced emotion or feeling. By the law of Diffusion this emotion produced physical reactions which constituted expression. For effective expression, therefore, control over mental activity was more important than control over voice and body. For this last conclusion Curry was indebted again to Alexander Bain who had written:

In restoring some past state of feeling, with all the diffusive manifestation proper to it--a thing not often wanted by people generally, but important in special avocations, as the platform or the stage,--the intervention of ideas is more thorough-going than the muscular command of the organs of expression, seeing that if we can only resuscitate the feeling itself, all the diffusive accompaniments are sure to follow.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Province, p. 87. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 91. ⁶⁹Bain, Emotions, p. 379.

This section has attempted to explain Curry's conception of the mind in the light of the psychological theories which influenced that conception. Considering the complexity of this conception, there is nothing remarkable in the complaint of one student of Curry's that "a definition of mind is nowhere given in any of Dr. Curry's works."⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Curry did have a firm conception of mind. In fact he regarded the mind as the cause of all expression. It now remains to examine the second step in expression which Curry designated as means.

II. Means

For Curry the "means" or agent of expression was the activity of the voice and body. In the act of expression, he believed, the speaker, reader, or actor should pay little or no attention to this activity. Strong mental activity alone would directly and involuntarily control both voice and body.⁷¹ To prove this contention, Curry cited Bain's law of Diffusion:

A vast number of facts "showing that the connection of mind and body is not occasional or partial, but thorough-going and complete," have been gathered by scientists. "It has been noted," says Bain, "in all ages and countries, that the feelings possess a

⁷⁰M. Oclo Miller, "The Psychology of Dr. S. S. Curry as Revealed by His Attitude Toward the Mind-Body Problem" (unpublished Master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1929), p. 70.

⁷¹Curry added an important qualification to this belief. Mind could control voice and body only if these "means" were not perverted by bad speaking habits or abnormalities. For a discussion of this qualification see pp. 219-42. of this study.

natural language or expression."⁷²

The means of expression, Curry concluded, was inseparable from the mental states which motivated it.

The apparent clarity and simplicity of Bain's view that mind controlled body finds a counterpart in Curry's descriptions of mind and body in Province. When all of Curry's works are taken into account, however, his views on mind and body are frequently muddled by his specific applications. Several of his exercises, for example, seem to imply that the body influenced mind rather than the reverse. One of Curry's pupils, Oclo Miller, has subjected Curry's views on mind and body to an intensive examination, and Miller's conclusions reflect much of the confusion inherent in Curry's position. Miller wrote:

The greatest number of statements concerning the cause of expression, which is in the mind, and the agent, which is the body, favor this one-sided interaction theory. The terms "Mind" and "Soul" are used interchangeably as the source of the cause of expression. In fact, there is so much repetition of this one-sided interaction theory that a casual reading of Curry's books might lead one to think he adhered to it consistently.

However, upon closer examination one finds also a two-sided interactionism, body and mind mutually affecting each other. The number of statements directly showing the influence of body on mind are decidedly less in number than those showing the opposite influence, but they are none the less convincing. And in the examination of Dr. Curry's methods of teaching and his exercises both for health and for expression, the evidence of the influence of the body on the mind is much more stressed than is the influence of the mind on body.⁷³

⁷²Province, pp. 246-47.

⁷³Miller, p. 71.

Perhaps because Miller restricted his study solely to an examination of Curry's position on mind and body, his investigations never carried him to the source of Curry's position, Alexander Bain. A close reading of Bain, however, does much to clarify the seeming confusion in Curry's writing. Bain made two points which are especially relevant to this problem. First, although Bain believed that a mental phenomenon would result in physical expression, that mind did cause bodily function, he did not conceive of mind as something quite apart from matter or body. What the layman loosely referred to as a mental process, Bain explained, was really a succession of physical events taking place within the brain. What the layman recognized as an idea in the mind could not occur apart from a corresponding physical or material event in the brain. One must realize, Bain insisted, that mind without body was a physical impossibility:

Of mind apart from body we have no direct experience, and absolutely no knowledge. . . . We have every reason for believing that there is, in company with all our mental processes, an unbroken material succession. From the ingress of a sensation, to the outgoing responses in action, the mental succession is not for an instant dis severed from a physical succession.⁷⁴

Bain was, of course, trying to avoid a semantic quagmire with a careful explanation of what he meant by the term "mind." Curry, on the other hand, although he used Bain's theory, did not include Bain's description of the physical nature of the mind. There is

⁷⁴Bain, Mind and Body, pp. 130-31.

little wonder that the reader of Curry unfamiliar with Bain's work is confused by such statements as: "In fact, true training for expression is as much a mental act as a physical act."⁷⁵

Bain's book contains yet another observation which, when emphasized, clarifies Curry's position. Having established that "a mental fact" was really two-sided, having both a physical and a psychic nature, Bain concluded that "the so-called mental influences,--cheerful news, a fine poem, and the rest,--cannot operate, except on a frame physically prepared to respond to the stimulation."⁷⁶ In other words, if one wished to induce an emotional state, "the physical state of the individual must be adequate to its support."⁷⁷ Bain was echoing the thoughts of Charles Darwin who had declared that "most of our emotions . . . are so closely connected with their expression, that they hardly exist if the body remains passive."⁷⁸ On the strength of Bain's and Darwin's theories Curry concluded:

Thus we can see that while the body is most intimately connected with being, the transmission, and to a certain extent the character of the emotion, at any rate so far as it appears to others, is dependent upon the condition of the bodily organs. Nothing shows the importance of training to expression so much as the intimacy of soul and body.⁷⁹

⁷⁵Province, p. 247. ⁷⁶Bain, Mind and Body, p. 134.

⁷⁷Bain, Emotions, p. 17.

⁷⁸Darwin, Expression in Man and Animals, quoted in Province, p. 247.

⁷⁹Province, p. 247.

But to say that emotion could not develop without a responsive physique was to endorse neither James' theory that the physical response was the emotion nor the behavioristic position that body caused thought. Yet this is the very conclusion which Miller reached:

The most striking fact this study has brought out is that the point least stressed in Dr. Curry's theoretical psychology, viz., a monistic idea, or at least a behavioristic methodology, is the one which is most stressed in his teaching method. His approach to speech problems was essentially objective, and his teaching had very much in common with thorough-going behaviorists in the field of speech at the present. And although his slogan was "From Within Outward" his teaching showed more evidence of "From Without Inward."⁸⁰

Miller's specific arguments on this point warrant attention. First, Miller explained, Curry "often made the point that in practicing for oral expression voice and action crystallized the idea for the person."⁸¹ This hardly indicates behaviorism unless we take "crystallized" to mean "caused." Second:

While he [Curry] says the cause of everything, even of health, is in our minds, the volume How to Add Ten Years to Your Life contains suggestions the fundamental import of which is to induce a mental condition by assuming an attitude of mind (as he says) which really resolves itself into beginning from without, or assuming a certain bodily set.⁸²

Since How to Add is a set of physical exercises designed for

⁸⁰ Miller, p. 73.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 39-40.

rising in the morning, it is not surprising that Curry spent more time talking about the body than the mind. This is certainly not behaviorism, however, particularly when the book is laced with such comments as:

Never regard your exercises as merely physical. The expression "physical training" is a misnomer. All training is the action of mind. It may manifest itself in a physical direction, but training itself,--the putting forth,--is mental. It is the emotion we feel more than the movement that accomplishes results.⁸³

Third, Miller pointed out that:

A great deal of time was spent in exercises for making this change in posture [refers to physical transitions on the platform] smooth, and not such as would attract attention to itself. But in the beginning of his platform work the student was urged to change his position deliberately and to note the effect on his pitch, the variation in his thought. This too seems in direct accord with Woolbert's ideas.⁸⁴

On the other hand, one might just as easily conclude that the above was simply Curry's practical application of the belief expressed in Province that a fully realized emotion demanded a responsive physique.

Finally, Miller called attention to one of Curry's favorite maxims, that the student should "do the thing which breeds the thought."⁸⁵ Indeed, it is difficult to find a book by Curry in which this phrase does not occur. Yet the contexts in which the phrase appears do not necessarily point to

⁸³How to Add, p. 45. ⁸⁴Miller, pp. 45-46.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 58.

behaviorism. In the first place, the quotation is a slight rewording of Browning's line in The Ring and the Book:

But Art--wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind--Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.

In Province Curry used Browning's quotation not to explain how to achieve emotional realization in the reader, but rather, how the reader revealed truth to listeners:

Browning regards art as the only adequate way of telling the truth. One soul can never reveal adequately to another its conception of the highest ideals except by suggesting them through the medium of art.⁸⁶

Thus, "the aim of all delivery . . . is to 'do the thing shall breed the thought'" not in the mind of the reader but "in the heart of the hearer."⁸⁷

Perhaps the easiest way to show the contrast between Curry and the behaviorists is to compare their approaches to the problem of mind and body. In Curry's theory delivery was "a result of mental actions."⁸⁸ The approach of the behaviorists, on the other hand, was quite different as the following quotation from Charles H. Woolbert indicates:

It is psychologically sound that a sure way of making yourself believe a notion is to act as if you considered it true; you will in time come to accept it. So with expression; it can be so taught that the use of given devices of speech will throw the speaker into a given

⁸⁶Province, p. 75. ⁸⁷Ibid., p. 77. ⁸⁸Ibid., p. 39.

mood or attitude of thought.⁸⁹

In short, Curry based his treatment of the "means" of expression on Bain's belief that the mind was intimately connected with the body, that mental action caused physical reaction, and that mental phenomena could not be crystallized without a responsive physical mechanism. At the same time Curry never assumed either that bodily reaction was the emotion or that bodily action in any way caused mental phenomena.

III. Effect

The final step in the process of expression Curry called effect. Of the three steps, "cause," "means," and "effect," Curry spent the least time upon the "effect" of expression on the audience:

Although, as we have said, according to Curry expression involves cause, means, and effect, and the latter is the aim of all training in expression, nevertheless, effect is not a part of his method of training. He says, "The only way to improve expression is by affecting the cause and the means, as expression is an effect." Therefore, . . . Curry does not discuss effect as a part of the process of training.⁹⁰

This tendency of Curry and most expressionists to neglect effect motivated some of the most serious criticisms leveled against

⁸⁹Charles H. Woolbert, "Theories of Expression: Some Criticisms," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (1915), 134.

⁹⁰Carl Andrew Bowman, "A Study of the Curry System of Training in Expression" (unpublished Master's thesis, Northwestern University, 1925), p. 12.

them. One critic of expression was Charles H. Woolbert, the behaviorist, who wrote:

But the speaker is only half the transaction; the hearer is just as much as sic expressor of thought as the speaker. It is his mind that is to be affected; otherwise expression is aimed only at the empty air. Speaker and audience bear an equal part in the commerce of thoughts. Oral expression is vain without the hearer, for he must be made "to think the thought" just as much as the speaker.⁹¹

Woolbert's implication that the expressionists ignored the audience was somewhat exaggerated as the following quotation from Province shows:

It will be granted by all that no man feels, in trying to move a thousand men, as he does when in conversation with one. The situation is different. The emotions will be different, and expression correspondingly different.⁹²

Telling as Woolbert's argument was, Curry's neglect of effect and especially his failure to treat the influence of the audience at length was not an oversight but was deliberate. The psychological sources of Curry's theory help explain the expressionist's attitude toward the importance of the audience.⁹³

Once again, it is Bain's theory which provides the best explanation for Curry's attitude. In both Mind and Body and in

⁹¹Woolbert, pp. 132-33.

⁹²Province, p. 96. See also Lessons, pp. 19-20.

⁹³There are aesthetic as well as psychological explanations involved here, for the development of the expressive movement, of which Curry was a part, brought about a considerable reduction in the importance of the audience. See pp. 145-49 in this study.

The Emotions and the Will Bain had argued that every emotion and every intellectual idea had a prescribed physical manifestation:

It has been noted in all ages and countries, that the Feelings possess a natural language or Expression. So constant are the appearances characterizing the different classes of emotions, that we regard them as a part of the emotions themselves.⁹⁴

Hence, if a speaker expressed himself accurately, the audience would not fail to grasp his meaning:

Every pleasure and every pain, and every mode of emotion, has a definite wave of effects, which our observation makes known to us; and we apply the knowledge to infer other men's feelings from their outward display.⁹⁵

Thus, Curry insisted, the basic determinates of communication centered not in the audience, but within the reader or speaker. The speaker was the most important factor in communication, and the audience was significant only to the extent that it affected the speaker.⁹⁶

IV. Psychic Exercises for Intellect and Volition

Thus far this chapter has stressed the influence of psychology upon Curry's description of the mental processes. But Curry presented his description primarily to justify his method of teaching oral expression. This section, therefore, traces the influence of psychology upon Curry's method of developing

⁹⁴Bain, Mind and Body, p. 6.

⁹⁵Bain, Emotions, p. 4.

⁹⁶Province, pp. 96-97.

expression in the student.

Curry's method for the development of expression consisted primarily of two sets of exercises. These exercises Curry designated as "psychic" and "technical." According to Curry the "psychic" exercise had as its purpose "the specific practice of that mental action which tends to cause the right expressive action, or to establish conditions for such action."⁹⁷ In other words, psychic exercises served to develop the cause of expression since they treated only mental action.

"Technical" exercises, on the other hand, treated the means of expression since they were concerned entirely with physical action. According to Curry, technical exercises involved "direct volitional practice of a fundamental action."⁹⁸ As such, they were less important than psychic exercises since, as Lotze demonstrated, the role of volition in the manipulation of the voice and body during the act of expression was extremely limited. Curry also indicated that in actual oral expression the student should forget all technical exercises, their function being primarily to correct abnormalities and bad habits.⁹⁹ The influence of psychology on Curry's technical exercises is only marginal. These exercises reflect a far greater debt to elocution than to psychology.¹⁰⁰

Because Curry believed that expression depended primarily

⁹⁷Foundations, p. 14. ⁹⁸Ibid. ⁹⁹Mind, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰See pp. 222-42 of this study.

upon mental activity, he devoted four textbooks exclusively to the presentation of psychic exercises. These exercises were designed to develop the student's intellectual and emotional realization of the material to be read aloud. Assuming that the student possessed a normal voice and body, Curry believed that full intellectual and emotional realization would result in good oral expression.

To develop emotional realization, Curry offered a series of exercises which would develop the student's imagination. As noted earlier in this chapter, Curry did not believe that psychology had undertaken a valid investigation of imagination. Consequently, the influence of psychology on Curry's psychic exercises for the development of imagination and emotion was minimal.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, Curry based his psychic exercises for the development of the intellect and the will almost entirely upon psychological theories. Since Curry believed that all mental activity began with the intellectual realization of an idea or image, he entitled his first course in expression: "Processes of Thinking in the Modulation of the Voice."¹⁰²

In this course of exercises Curry's principal concern

¹⁰¹For a discussion of the psychic exercises for full emotional realization see the chapter on aesthetics.

¹⁰²This is the sub-title for Curry's Lessons in Vocal Expression, Course I.

was to demonstrate that the voice was directly responsive to thought.

These exercises began by making the student conscious of the rhythmical pulsations of the thought stream. The first direction to the student was to "read a short selection with a simple sequence of ideas, study the action of the mind and then read it aloud and accent the pulsations of the mind."¹⁰³

The second set of exercises treated individual ideas. Here, Curry would have the student deliberately slow down the stream of thought by means of volition until each idea would be vividly realized. Such vivid realization, Curry believed, would automatically result in "abandon." That is, the student, concentrating upon the idea or image, would of necessity lose his self-consciousness and abandon his voice and body to the influence of the idea.¹⁰⁴

The next set of exercises again instructed the student to concentrate upon each successive idea but this time to note the effect upon the pitch of the voice:

If one idea happens to be expressed on one pitch, another idea, antithetic to the preceding is instinctively contrasted to it in pitch. The focussing of the mind upon successive ideas, or the quick leap of the mind in thinking, spontaneously causes a leap of the voice.¹⁰⁵

The exercises which followed also called attention to the vocal

¹⁰³Lessons, p. 24.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 26-43.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 57.

effects of strong mental action. In turn the student was to note that between each idea there occurred a pause, and finally, that each individual idea was expressed in a group of words constituting a phrase. Thus, Curry believed, by concentrating upon mental activity, the student would develop his use of pitch, pause, and phrasing in oral expression.

Next, Curry moved from the study of individual ideas to the study of a group of ideas. True to Coleridge's terminology, Curry devoted these exercises to the development of "method, or logical relations."¹⁰⁶ All of the exercises were designed to improve the student's ability to discover the logical coherence among a number of ideas, and then to note the effect upon the voice of such a discovery. This effect Curry called "centralization":

It can be seen at once, therefore, that this is something different from accentuation: it is the manifestation not of successive ideas, but of the relation of these ideas to some central conception; it is the giving of some word or words by the voice so as to interpret the deeper meaning and relationship of ideas.¹⁰⁷

All of these psychic exercises reflect the influence of Curry's reading in psychology. Incorporating Hermann Lotze's belief that volition could not control the means of expression, these exercises concentrate upon its cause. Furthermore, they operate under Alexander Bain's assumption that strong mental

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 111.

activity directly resulted in physical activity. Finally, these exercises treat the intellectual actions of the mind as those actions are described by Coleridge and Spencer.

V. Summary

This chapter has attempted to explain Curry's theory of expression in the light of the psychological literature which influenced it. Psychology influenced all of the three elements of expression which Curry described as "cause," "means" and "effect." The cause of expression, according to Curry, was psychic or mental, and Curry divided the actions of the mind into intellect, emotion, and volition.

For Curry, Coleridge provided the best explanation of the intellect not only in its dealings with individual ideas but in its treatment of several ideas organized around a central idea.

In addition, Curry borrowed from Spencer's discussion of the rhythmic nature of psychic action. The rhythm of the intellect, Curry argued, resulted in a rhythmic vocal manifestation.

In Curry's discussions of the mind the intellect served as a point of departure for observations on both the will and the emotions, which represented the remaining mental elements. From Lotze, Curry borrowed the theory that man could not will or consciously control the physical manifestations of his mental

action. Man could control his thoughts, however, causing the intellect to resist the forces of association and concentrate upon a single idea. This resulted in "genuine thinking" or the concrete perception of ideas. Concrete or "situational" perception of ideas produced emotion, and the law of Diffusion caused emotion to stimulate physical manifestation.

Once the emotion was stimulated, it had to be controlled, or further progression of thought would be impossible. These views on the unique role of volition and the intellectual origin of emotion as well as the law of Diffusion, Curry borrowed from Alexander Bain. Bain also provided Curry with psychological authority for the latter's belief that mind was intimately related to and caused bodily response.

The subject of bodily response brought Curry to the second of the three elements of expression, the "means." Curry's treatment of means was based on the belief that mind unconsciously controlled the means of expression, i.e., voice and bodily action.

Curry said little about the third element of expression, the "effect" upon an audience. For this omission he has been severely criticized, especially by the behaviorists, in the early twentieth century. Curry's relative neglect of effect may have been influenced by Bain's insistence that genuine emotional realization was expressed in a nearly universal language, perceptible to all civilized men.

While the influence of psychology seems to pervade Curry's whole theory of expression, it is particularly visible in his concept of the nature of mind, the cause of expression. Indeed, with the exception of Curry's observations on imagination, his treatment of mind is fundamentally grounded in speculative psychology.

CHAPTER V

CURRY'S DEBT TO AESTHETICS

The domain of aesthetics represents the most fecund source of Curry's ideas on oral communication and especially oral interpretation. In the areas of psychology, philology, and education Curry was content to borrow the pertinent tenets of a handful of thinkers, but in the area of aesthetics Curry had read both widely and carefully. In the Province alone he quoted from the theories of Buffon, Browning, Dowden, Diderot, Hegel, Wagner, Schelling, Thore', Shopenhauer, Wordsworth, Goethe, Kant, Coleridge, Norton, Pater, Hunt, Arnold, Lamb, Beaconsfield, Ruskin, Emerson, and Carlyle. Curry's later texts, particularly Imagination and Dramatic Instinct, introduce a host of other aesthetic theorists. These include both major figures like Véron, Tennyson, and De Quincey, and minor critics such as G. H. Lewis, John Shairp, and Phillips Brooks. This breadth of sources is a good indication of the relative importance of the role of aesthetics in Curry's theory of oral communication. It would be no exaggeration to say that aesthetics represents the keystone of Curry's theory. Curry devoted several

chapters of Province to purely aesthetic considerations such as "Expression in Art," "Expression as a Form of Art," "Artistic Spontaneity," and "Criticism."

The ultimate proof of the centrality of aesthetics in Curry's theory is, of course, his deliberate selection of the term "expression" to denote his subject matter. Though "expression" had been to some extent a concern of rhetoric, "the perfectly achieved expression of a thought in words was always considered a poetic beauty."¹ Though such scientists as Charles Bell and Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century indicated some interest in expression, the popularity of the term in Curry's day derived largely from the speculations of aestheticians like Herder, Coleridge, J. S. Mill, Keble, George Eliot, Pater, and ultimately, Benedetto Croce.²

The expressive movement arose in part as a protest against an older aesthetic school which claimed among others the loyalties of Sir Philip Sidney, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. Particularly influential from the time of Sidney down to the late eighteenth century, this school has been called by one historian the pragmatic movement in aesthetic theory.³

¹G. N. G. O'rsini, "Expression, Theory of," Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 266.

²Ibid., pp. 266-67.

³M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1958), pp. 14-21.

Perhaps the predominant feature of pragmatism was that "it looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim."⁴

Focusing principal attention upon the audience, pragmatic criticism turned to classical rhetoric for "much of the basic vocabulary, and many of the characteristic topics. . . . For rhetoric had been universally regarded as an instrument for achieving persuasion in an audience."⁵ Furthermore, "emphasis on the rules and maxims of an art is native to all criticism that grounds itself in the demands of an audience." Consequently, "all but a few eccentrics among eighteenth-century critics believed in the validity of some set of universal rules."⁶

The expressive movement began with the first stirrings of Romanticism in England and Germany. Though its roots may be traced as far back as Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762), who defined a poem as "a perfect sensuous utterance,"⁷ the movement posed no serious threat to the hegemony of pragmatism in England until the publications of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads in 1798 and the famous "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" in 1800. Shunning

⁴Ibid., p. 15.

⁵Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

⁷Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, A History of Esthetics (rev. and enl.; Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 289.

both rhetoric and rules, Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"⁸ and thereby shifted the attention of aesthetics from the audience to the poet himself:

Almost all the major critics of the English romantic generation phrased definitions or key statements showing a parallel alignment from work to poet. Poetry is the overflow, utterance, or projection of the thought and feelings of the poet; or else (in the chief variant formulation) poetry is defined in terms of the imaginative process which modifies and synthesizes the images, thoughts, and feelings of the poet. This way of thinking, in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic-product and the criteria by which it is to be judged, I shall call the expressive theory of art.⁹

The expressive point of view, which Wordsworth enunciated, was soon taken up by other Romantics. Coleridge's essays in The Friend as well as his Biographia Literaria introduced into the English critical mainstream the expressive aesthetic theories of Germany, particularly the work of Kant, Schiller, Schelling, and the Schlegels,¹⁰ while other Romantics such as Keats and Shelley further sharpened the distinctions between expression and pragmatism.

Yet though the great Romantic thinkers represent the

⁸William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800), Criticism: Twenty Major Statements, sel. and ed. Charles Kaplan (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 282.

⁹Abrams, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, Vol. II: The Romantic Age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 151.

seminal point for expression, the movement extended far beyond the boundaries of the Romantic period. No major Romantic poet, for example, actually used the word "expression" to define art until Shelley. In his "A Defence of Poetry," published in 1840, he declared: "Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination.'"¹¹ Indeed, the use of the term "expression" in aesthetic definitions seems to be more characteristic of Victorian than Romantic aestheticians. In 1833, for example, John Stuart Mill declared that poetry was "the expression or utterance of feeling."¹² On the continent in the 1870's, Eugène Véron concluded that "all arts . . . were essentially . . . spontaneous effects of the instinct that drives all living things to express their emotions."¹³ The next decade brought the appearance of "Walter Pater's Essay on Style (1888), which contains the most advanced expressionist theory of the age."¹⁴ Even two years after the publication of Curry's Province, Benedetto Croce was only beginning the development of what one historian calls "the most comprehensive theory of poetry (and art in general)

¹¹Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," Criticism: Twenty Major Statements, p. 349.

¹²John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), I, 71.

¹³Eugène Véron, Aesthetics, trans. W. H. Armstrong (London: Chapman & Hall, 1879), p. 31.

¹⁴Orsini, p. 266.

as e[xpression]."¹⁵

These few facts concerning the expressive movement are particularly important to an understanding of Curry's teachings. First, they demonstrate that Curry's thoughts were ripening during the height of the expressive movement. Second, they explain in part, at least, the strong antipathy he displayed toward those elocutionists of his own day who based their theories on the pragmatists' faith in rules. Finally, they explain why Curry took such a deep interest in both German and English Romantic aesthetics.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the influence of aesthetic theory upon Curry's concept of oral expression. Because this influence pervades almost every aspect of Curry's theory, this chapter treats all those elements which Curry believed to be fundamental to an act of oral expression. Although Curry did not present them systematically, his treatment of oral expression emphasized four separate but fundamental elements. The first of these elements was the communicator. Curry usually referred to the communicator as the "artist," though he addressed many of his remarks specifically to the "reader," the "speaker," and the "actor" as well. The second element was the listener, whom Curry usually designated as the "audience." The third element was the process or means of

¹⁵Ibid.

communication. Curry believed that oral expression could utilize two means of communication which he called "manifestation" and "representation." Finally, the last fundamental element was the message or the communication. In Curry's theory the message for the public speaker was the speech, for the actor it was the role or the play, and for the reader the message was the recitation.

I. The Artist: Reader, Speaker, Actor

To the aestheticians of the expressive movement, the artist was the sine qua non of aesthetics:

In general terms, the central tendency of the expressive theory may be summarized in this way: A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind.¹⁶

At the height of the expressive movement, Véron was to declare: "The beautiful in art springs mainly from the intervention of the genius of man when more or less excited by special emotion," and "aesthetics is the science whose object is the study and elucidation of the manifestations of artistic genius."¹⁷

Curry unquestionably agreed with Véron, for in Mind and

¹⁶Abrams, p. 22.

¹⁷Véron, pp. 107-09.

Voice he wrote: "Art has been called by Véron 'the intervention of personality.' The artist must express his own impressions. . . . In expressing any feeling, the vocal artist gives the measure of his own realization."¹⁸ In Province Curry devoted a full chapter to "Expression and Personality." There he quoted not Véron but Schlegel's statement that "man can give nothing to his fellow-man but himself."¹⁹

To validate the emphasis upon the artist on which Curry insisted, he referred his readers to the whole expressive movement. "There is a growing tendency at the present time," he pointed out, "in all departments of art to trace the connection between the character of the artist and his work."²⁰ In the case of Shakespeare expressive critics "have studied his whole life in connection with these plays and out of this has also come a more thorough study of the nature of art."²¹

Yet in Curry's expressive outlook though art was the revelation of an artist, it was a revelation of the inner life of the artist. Speaking again of Shakespeare, he wrote:

All the facts we know about him might be placed upon a few pages, but his personality shines through his work, even through his plays. We feel the moral grandeur of the man, his insight into human nature, his grand moral proportions, his intuitions, impulses and ideals; and these are the greatest part of the man and form the foundation of his character.²²

¹⁸Mind, pp. 303-04. ¹⁹Province, p. 64.

²⁰Ibid., p. 68. ²¹Ibid., p. 69. ²²Ibid., p. 71.

For Curry, then, art was a revelation of character not biography.

"Was the personality of Shelley noble?" he asked, and he answered:

Shelley is the best illustration of the fact that art is more intimately related to the character of the artist than any other mode of expression. Shelley in his essays has been shown by many critics to be a different man from what he is in his poetry. In his Defence of Atheism or Essay upon Christianity, we see his intellectual views, his prejudices. We see that phase of his character which was the result of circumstances, persecutions and misconceptions. In his Prometheus Unbound, we feel what he desired the world to be. Here we meet his faith and hope; the beautiful soul that was revealed otherwise only to a few sympathetic friends is made manifest to the world. Here the real man is revealed truthfully though unconsciously and indirectly through his art.²³

Indeed, "the emotions, experience and character of the artist mould his work far more than his physical traits and peculiarities."²⁴

Having asserted that all art served as an expression of the personality of the artist, Curry applied this fundamental axiom of expression to oral communication. For Curry the artist in oral communication was the actor, the orator, or the reader, and therefore, in oral expression the characters of these speakers had to be the starting point of all theory.

Curry believed there were two great faults in oral expression. The first great fault developed when the speaker or reader

may be really in earnest, may feel to the depths of his soul the importance of the thought in relation to others, but from a misconception he may polish

²³Ibid., pp. 71-72.

²⁴Ibid., p. 73.

down his delivery . . . until nothing but the smooth, delicate finish is manifest to his fellow-men. . . . His delivery is faultless, his elocution perfect, but still you feel that its very perfection conceals the personality of the man."²⁵

The second great fault developed when once again the speaker had a "deep appreciation of the truth," but his habits of expression had so perverted his delivery that "it hinders rather than bears witness to the truth."²⁶

When oral expression was sullied by either the abnormal habits of the speaker or the belief that delivery should be "polished," it failed to perform its essential function, the revelation of personality. The single criterion for delivery, Curry insisted, was that it "should be transparent."²⁷ Thus by adopting the expressive point of view that "art is the intervention of personality," Curry could conclude that:

The perfection of all expression must be due to the transparency of personality. There must be a perfect manifestation of the conditions and activities of the spirit and character of the man, and whatever really improves delivery more intimately unites delivery to the soul.²⁸

II. The Audience

According to M. H. Abrams, at the hands of the expressionists the audience, so central in importance to the pragmatists, suffered almost total neglect.²⁹ Expression "fostered

²⁵Ibid., p. 64. ²⁶Ibid., p. 65. ²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 65-66. ²⁹Abrams, p. 25.

a criticism which on principle diminished the importance of the audience as a determinant of poetry and poetic value."³⁰

For Curry the principles which determined good oral expression depended but little upon the audience. Oratory for him was not so much a question of audience adaptation as it was a "presentation of truth by personality."³¹ Furthermore, "from even the artificial Quintillian [sic], who said that an orator was 'a good man speaking well,' to the greatest orators of our own times, this truth has ever been recognized."³² If oratory was to be great, he insisted, "there must necessarily be behind it a great artist--a soul broad enough and deep enough to 'speak not merely to men but also to mankind.'"³³

Yet, contrary to the conclusions of some of his critics,³⁴ Curry did not ignore the audience completely. Nor had his sources in the expressive movement. Even Wordsworth had insisted that essentially a poet was "a man speaking to men,"³⁵ and therefore, "the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken

³⁰Ibid., p. 26. ³¹Province, p. 75. ³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 80.

³⁴See for example Charles H. Woolbert, "Theories of Expression: Some Criticisms," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (1915), 127-143. See also pp. 126-28. in this study.

³⁵Wordsworth, p. 286.

by men."³⁶ Furthermore, Browning³⁷ had considered the relationship between the work of art and the audience, insisting that art existed primarily to stir a deeper realization of truth in the audience. One excerpt from The Ring and the Book (an excerpt which, by the way, Curry saw fit to include in both Province and Lessons) reads:

But Art--wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind--Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.³⁸

Curry discussed the audience in only one book, Province. He admitted that the presence and the nature of an audience would have some influence upon the delivery of a speech or a poem:

If any one who has all his life spoken with ease, but only to a small group, in conversation, should suddenly be called upon to speak to a thousand people, he not only finds himself in a new situation, but face to face with the necessity of doing certain physical things with which he has never been familiar.³⁹

Elsewhere, Curry even went so far as to agree with the elocutionists that "the sympathy of the audience affects the speaker, and it is very difficult for him to feel exactly the

³⁶Ibid., pp. 285-86.

³⁷Curry was perhaps more familiar with the ideas of Browning and Wordsworth than any other figures in literature. Curry devoted a complete book to a consideration of the former, Browning and the Dramatic Monologue, and the latter served as the subject of Curry's doctoral dissertation, "A Review of Wordsworth's Excursion" (1880).

³⁸Quoted in Province, p. xvii.

³⁹Province, p. 256.

same before different audiences."⁴⁰

These observations on the audience posed something of a dilemma for Curry. On the one hand, the expressive aestheticians insisted that in art the speaker and not the audience was the central element, and on the other hand, Curry's experience told him that the audience did exert an influence upon delivery. Curry attempted to solve this paradox first by minimizing the importance of the circular response between speaker or reader and the audience. As an expressionist he had to insist that "every true artist has to discipline himself to secure his emotion as the response to his imagination, and not be dependent upon the sympathy of his audience in order at all times to carry out his ideals."⁴¹ Furthermore, even if one admitted that an audience might influence the speaker "this is no argument whatever for the adoption of the views of the mechanical school."⁴²

On the other hand, Curry conceded that the expression of ideas before a large audience would differ from the expression of the same ideas before a few friends. Among other things, "not only must there be more energy, more breath, but longer and more salient inflections."⁴³ But the difference in delivery, Curry insisted, was a difference of degree, not of kind. Those who

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 97.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., p. 255.

taught oral expression should not look to the audience for rules on adaptation of delivery:

The essential elements of the form must remain the same, or he [the speaker] is unnatural. As in the enlargement of a photograph, all parts must be enlarged in the same ratio, so the fundamental inflections, their relations and the intervals between words must be simply extended in exact proportions.⁴⁴

No matter how large the audience, the more important element in oral expression was still the artist. If his delivery was to be enlarged, it had to be enlarged not according to any rules of audience adaptation but from a deeper realization, a deeper emotional commitment, within the speaker. To illustrate his point, Curry asked the reader to visualize "a man stirred by great patriotism, trying to arouse a thousand men." Such a man, Curry said, did not consciously adapt his delivery to his audience, but rather, developed "even a greater degree of emotion" than he would have had in intimate conversation. "So every gesture must be expanded and every inflection extended according to the measure of the intensity of his thought and feeling."⁴⁵

In short, though the presence of an audience was a requisite of oral expression, in Curry's theory the audience had but little effect upon the nature of that expression.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 96-97.

III. Process: Nature, Manifestation, and Representation

The third element necessary for oral expression to occur was the means or method by which the artist achieved communication. Unfortunately, Curry's numerous discussions of this third element of expression were frequently obscured by a bewildering number of terms. In a single book, for example, Curry treated as separate entities the "kinds" of expression ("there are three KINDS of EXPRESSION, one belonging both to the eye and the ear, one to the ear alone and one to the eye alone"⁴⁶), the "means" of expression ("the means in expression are physical. The thought and the emotion depend for revelation upon the body and voice of the man"⁴⁷), and the "method" of expression ("it is . . . essential to know some of the characteristics of nature's methods of expression"⁴⁸).

In all of these cases, however, Curry was referring to the process by which a speaker, reader, or actor revealed his ideas and emotions to an audience. Furthermore, Curry insisted, however much the process of expressing ideas and emotions might differ from one speaker to another, it had to conform to the process by which nature expressed herself. "A higher view of the relation of art to nature, is that there seems to be a correspondence in the processes of production."⁴⁹ Though Curry's

⁴⁶Ibid., p. xi.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁹Ibid.

reference to "nature" reflected the influence of certain educational theorists,⁵⁰ it also reflected the influence of the expressive aestheticians. Almost to a man these aestheticians had turned to nature or the physical universe for a "method" or "process" of expression. In Germany Schelling, whom Curry quoted in Province, had argued that "art and organic nature occupy strictly analogous places at different levels of the system. The organism exhibits the synthesis of conscious and unconscious activity, or liberty and necessity." The true task of the artist was "to imitate the spirit of nature which, working in the core of things, speaks by form and shape as if by symbols."⁵¹

An earlier chapter has called attention to Curry's frequent quotations from Coleridge's essay, "Method," and Coleridge, no less than Schelling, had turned to nature for his method. According to M. H. Abrams, Coleridge's views on the processes of art were derived from Coleridge's close study of nature. "To place passages from Coleridge's biology and his criticism side by side is to reveal at once how many basic concepts have migrated from the one province into the other."⁵²

Curry also quoted from R. W. Emerson's essay on "Nature." Emerson's position, like that of Coleridge, was that natural

⁵⁰See Chapter II in this study.

⁵¹Schelling, quoted in Gilbert and Kuhn, p. 433.

⁵²Abrams, p. 170.

processes paralleled artistic processes. "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact,"⁵³ he observed. Furthermore, nature expressed from the center outward. "Every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the center of nature and radiates to the circumference."⁵⁴

Curry devoted the second section of Province to what he called the "Search for Method," and in the spirit of the expressive movement he turned the first chapter over to a consideration of the "Fundamental Modes of Nature." "It is a maxim in every body's mouth," he noted, "that all art is founded upon nature. But what do we mean by this phrase?" Certainly not a servile imitation, for this "would be merely copying, or photographing."⁵⁵ Imitation, Curry warned, was merely the study of nature's "products" and not her "processes." Although Curry advocated a study of nature's "processes" rather than her "products," he warned that such a study could be difficult for with "processes" "we must observe that which is rapidly passing, and which can not be stayed."⁵⁶ This is one reason, Curry concluded, that so much more was known about the plastic arts which produced tangible "products" than about the art of delivery which was dynamic and passing:

⁵³Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature, Addresses and Lectures (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Co., n.d.), p. 22.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 34. ⁵⁵Province, pp. 167-68.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 169.

So that while there are schools of art in painting, specifically and accurately defined, and though the same differences are presented in all our public reading and oratoric delivery, yet rarely, if ever, do people think of different schools of histrionic art. Again, as regards methods of developing delivery, is there any well-defined, or even poorly-defined account of the various methods, with their specific differences, by which oratory and histrionic art have been developed? There has never been a specific method thoroughly worked out, which has presented adequate methods for all phases of the problem.⁵⁷

Having distinguished between product and process, Curry began his discussion of the fundamental characteristics of nature's method of expression. Curry believed that there were four such laws or characteristics.

First, he argued, echoing the ideas of Emerson, all expressions in nature "come from within outward."⁵⁸ And in a phrase reminiscent of Coleridge's biological rhetoric he declared: "Everything has its 'seed in itself.'"⁵⁹ Curry contrasted this first natural process with the operations of a machine. "All life seems an emanation from a mystic center," but "a machine moves from external application of force" (*Italics mine*):

The life and strength by which the bird sings and flies, comes from its own heart. But a machine moves according to fixed mechanical laws, and the application of the force is definite, and is almost as manifest as the action itself.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 170.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 171. See also the influence of Comenius described in Chapter II of this study.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 171-72. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 172.

Second, "all expression must be spontaneous."⁶¹ "In organic nature, every plant, every animal, however vast is the number of its species, is so kept from novelty and singularity, has an individual life of its own, which life is and must be original,"⁶² he said, quoting W. H. Hudson in Imagination. Thus, though "two coins may be made alike because they are produced by a mechanical process, . . . there are no two leaves alike in all the world."⁶³

Third, "another characteristic of expression in nature is unity." Here, be the influence direct or indirect, Curry was particularly indebted to Coleridge. "There is every where a 'reconciliation of opposites.'"⁶⁴ Curry found unity not only in nature as a whole ("every law discovered, from Newton's law of gravitation to the latest phase of evolution, has revealed more and more the unity of nature")⁶⁵ but in the individual productions of nature ("there is a vital and absolute union

⁶¹Ibid., p. 176. By "spontaneous," Curry sometimes meant "original." Thus, in Imagination he wrote: "Among the principles of art one has been named originality or spontaneity." (p. 350) More often Curry used "spontaneity" to mean that which is done without premeditation or the deliberate intervention of the will.

⁶²W. H. Hudson, quoted in Imagination, p. 351.

⁶³Province, p. 177.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 178. Curry's phrase is from Coleridge. See Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, ed. with his aesthetical essays by J. Shawcross (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), II, 12.

⁶⁵Province, p. 178.

between the different parts of every organism").⁶⁶

Finally, the last "important characteristic of nature is freedom."⁶⁷ While Curry's understanding of "freedom" has already been explained in the chapter on education, one additional point should be stressed here. Though Curry insisted that "freedom" did not mean freedom from the laws of nature, he did interpret the term as meaning freedom from the external and artificial "rules" of the pragmatists. "The man who lives merely in the rules that have been laid down, however important these rules may be, will be artificial and constricted."⁶⁸ Contrary to the beliefs of Walker, with all his artificial rules,⁶⁹ "the great artist has always been one who has broken through rules, and laid hold of the principles of nature."⁷⁰

Curry believed that all of the fundamental characteristics which he saw in nature's processes had important implications for the student of oral expression. Because nature always proceeded from within outward, "the great point in training an artist is to so co-ordinate the development of all the faculties of the man as to stimulate the artistic impulse and make it stronger and nobler." The delivery of the speaker or reader "must be the external manifestation of internal plenitude of force and life."⁷¹ For the teacher of oral reading, this first

⁶⁶Ibid. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 179. ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 181.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 375-76. ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 181. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 173.

characteristic of nature's process of expression meant that training had to begin with a clear conception of the material being read:

For the development of Vocal Expression, the harmonious co-operation of all the perceptive powers is necessary; its beauty and power depend upon the living imaginative images which rise in the mind. The more vivid and adequate the conception of the speaker, the greater the emotion, and the more intense the feeling, the more real are the ideas, the quicker and stronger the response in the modulation of the voice and the flash of the eye. The number of significant modulations in voice, face and body, is in proportion to the vividness of the conception which the speaker is striving to convey. The same principle underlies all true artistic power. Orators, actors, painters, poets, or novelists, are great in proportion to their power to realize truth.⁷²

The second characteristic of natural expression, or spontaneity, according to Curry, proved that delivery should be spontaneous or original. Just as each different plant and animal expressed the divine force within it in a different way, each pupil should develop according to the laws of his own personality. "What is natural to one man is not natural to another. One man moves rapidly, another moves slowly. To endeavor to make all move by a uniform standard, is to destroy their nature."⁷³ "Great power in expression," he believed, "is dependent upon power in thought and power of passion" but not upon power of the will.⁷⁴ "Consciousness and will act at the

⁷²Lessons, p. 28.

⁷³Province, p. 177.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 193.

initiation and at the climax, but between [the acts of the will] the great spontaneous impulses of the soul are aroused and dominant."⁷⁵

The third characteristic of nature was unity. "But what is the application of this to expression?" Curry asked, and he answered that "expression must ever be the speaking of the whole being through the whole body."⁷⁶

Thus did Curry look to nature to "furnish, not only the tools, but also the method of procedure itself."⁷⁷ Curry's protestations notwithstanding, however, his observations of nature did not provide him with the actual process whereby oral expression could occur. The "characteristics" which Curry saw in nature, namely, efference, spontaneity, unity, and freedom, were actually criteria by which any process of expression might be elevated. This is not to say that Curry did not discuss the process or means of oral expression. In fact, he devoted the first section of Province to an explanation of the means of expression which, according to Curry, was language. Expression proceeded, Curry declared, by means of three languages: the language of words, the language of voice, and the language of gesture.⁷⁸

Curry further indicated that these languages operated on two separate levels. More precisely, he believed that the

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 192. ⁷⁶Ibid., p. 179. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 168.

⁷⁸See Chapter III of this study.

languages of oral expression could communicate the mental state of the speaker both directly by voice and gesture and indirectly by words. In other words, a speaker could show his emotional state by the tone of voice and his bodily actions, or he could describe his emotional state by means of words. Again, Curry's discussions of these levels of communication are somewhat obscured by his rather loose terminology. When Curry was specifically referring to the "languages of expression," he called the direct communication of mental states expression by "signs," and he called the indirect communication of mental states expression by "symbols." Frequently, however, especially when Curry was discussing "the art of expression," he referred to the direct expression of mental states as "manifestation." The indirect expression of mental states Curry called "representation."

Though aestheticians had frequently used both "manifestation" and "representation" in their discussions of art, no major expressive aesthetician had used these terms together to distinguish between two similar but subtly different artistic processes as did Curry. Nevertheless, several prominent expressionists had discussed concepts which closely paralleled Curry's understanding of "manifestation" and "representation."

One of these expressionists was G. W. F. Hegel. Curry read and apparently deeply admired Hegel's philosophy, for

he not only referred to Hegel in his first discussion of "manifestation" and "representation," but he organized his chapter, "History and Expression," around "Hegel's discussion regarding the development of art."⁷⁹ Wimsatt and Brooks have summarized Hegel's organization of the history of art as follows:

Hegel divides all art into three stages: first symbolic--where, as in the Egyptian pyramids and temples, the activity of spirit or idea only half struggles forth from the mass of matter; second classic--where, as in Greek sculpture, idea (form) and matter are perfectly fused; and third romantic--where, as in modern music, painting, and (above all) poetry, spirit overflows and envelops matter in self-conscious fulness.⁸⁰

Curry's ideas on the history of art sprang directly from Hegel:

He [Hegel] divides the arts into periods. The first is Symbolic, where matter transcends the idea, the idea not being clearly manifested or even able to permeate its material fully. The second is called the Classic period. Here the idea finds its form, permeates its material, and there is a perfect balance between them.⁸¹

Curry also agreed with Hegel that in the third stage of art, "the idea transcends the form." Unlike Hegel, who preferred "symbolic" art to Romantic art, however, Curry tended to favor the third period of art:

The third period is the Romantic or Christian, where the idea transcends its form. Here the artist feels that the idea he wishes to express cannot be completely embodied, that it belongs to the spiritual and eternal and can only be suggested.⁸²

⁷⁹Province, p. 144.

⁸⁰William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 369.

⁸¹Province, p. 144. ⁸²Ibid.

Curry probably had Hegel's distinction between "Christian" and symbolic art in mind when he introduced the terms "manifestation" and "representation," for he described "symbolic" art as "representative." Christian art, on the other hand, "must necessarily be manifestive."⁸³

Though Curry believed that the symbol was important to artistic expression, he also believed that symbols were capable of communicating only a small part of the artist's total personality. Thus, "representative" art with its dependence upon symbols Curry relegated to a position of minor importance.

Greek art was perfect as far as it went, but it attempted little more than to reproduce characteristics chiefly physical and objective, separate from the personality of the artist.⁸⁴

Curry's paraphrases and adaptations of Hegel were frequently muddled by terminology. Though Hegel had referred to Greek art as "classical" and to Egyptian art as "symbolic," Curry often referred to both Greek and Egyptian art as "symbolic."

Curry believed that the more subjective emotional side of the artist's personality could only be communicated directly. When speaking of the languages of expression, Curry called this process communication by "signs." More often, however, he spoke of it as communication by

⁸³Ibid., p. 145. ⁸⁴Ibid.

"suggestion."⁸⁵ Art which communicated by suggestion Curry called "manifestation."

Suggestion is an essential law of all Christian, or as Hegel calls it, Romantic art; because there is an endeavor to reveal that which is too deep, too infinite, to be more than hinted at. The art of expression is simply an art of intimation. Hence we see that Christian art must necessarily be manifestive and more or less imperfect when judged by the old representative standards. For "to express the infinite we must suggest infinitely more than we express."⁸⁶

Curry attempted to clarify the distinction between "manifestation" and "representation" by presenting specific examples of each. Representative art, he believed, "had its highest expression in sculpture. Sculpture uses the three dimensions of space, painting uses only two."⁸⁷ On the other hand, music, because it made the least use of symbols, was the most manifestive form of art. "Music is the direct manifestation of the neumenon or the great soul of the world."⁸⁸ Despite his preference for the "manifestive" process in art, Curry sought an art form in which both

⁸⁵ Curry's description of "manifestation" as both "direct" and at the same time "suggestive" is curious. He argued that manifestation was "direct" because it communicated through natural signs whose meanings were clear to all, as opposed to "representation" which communicated "indirectly" through artificial symbols whose meanings were arbitrarily assigned. At the same time the signs of manifestation could only "suggest" the emotional states which motivated them. Curry was apparently unaware of any incompatibility between "direct" and "suggestive" as descriptions of manifestation.

⁸⁶ Province, pp. 145-46. ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 108.

"representation" and "manifestation" were present, but where the latter dominated the former. "Representative elements must always be transcended by the manifestive,"⁸⁹ he wrote.

Curry introduced the terms "manifestation" and "representation" in the course of a discussion of art in general. He also frequently used these terms in his discussions of the art of oral expression.

It will be recalled that Curry divided the "means" of vocal expression or delivery into three languages, vocal, physical, and verbal. The first two, which involved tones and gestures, he classified as languages of "signs" and the latter he called the language of "symbols." In light of the above discussion Curry's first application of "manifestation" and "representation" to delivery is easily followed. Because verbal language dealt in symbols, he insisted, it was primarily a representative means of expression. The vocal and physical languages, on the other hand, utilized signs and were, therefore, primarily manifestive means. "Manifestation . . . does not deal in those things that stand in the place of something else; it does not deal in symbols but in signs."⁹⁰ Furthermore, because Curry regarded voice and pantomime as the most important languages in expression, he concluded that "vocal expression is primarily manifestive, like music."⁹¹

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 117-18. ⁹⁰Ibid., p. 103. ⁹¹Ibid., p. 126.

Yet, though physical and vocal languages were by nature manifestive languages, they were easily perverted by the elocutionists into representative languages. In fact, some elocutionists, Curry warned, had reduced these languages to the lowest form of representation, mere imitation. Even pantomime, which should be manifestive, had been reduced by the elocutionists to imitation:

The highest function of pantomime is manifestation. The simplest words, as "good-night," can be rendered by manifestive vocal expression and pantomime in a hundred ways. Representation confines it to one. Take a simple phrase like, "he fell." Representative pantomime becomes ridiculous and can only indicate vaguely and indifferently the direction or location of the fall. But manifestive pantomime can reveal the feelings of the man who contemplated the fall. It can show that the fall was comical, was dangerous, that it was a moral fall, a literal fall, a fall to be regretted or to be rejoiced over, a fall that caused surprise or awakened anger, a fall that brought ruin or escape to the innocent.⁹²

The distinction that Curry had in mind here was a distinction between demonstrating an action and suggesting an action.

Indeed, at one point in Province he declared: "Whenever there is too great representation of detail, then the great general impression which can only be suggested or manifested, is lost."⁹³

Furthermore, Curry used the terms "manifestation" and "representation" to distinguish between acting and oral interpretation:

⁹²Ibid., p. 130.

⁹³Ibid., p. 111. Italics mine.

The difference between public reading and acting as arts, is that acting is more representative and reading more manifestive. A monologue is more suggestive to the imagination, more manifestive of feeling, and there is less "business." There is a greater call for all the subtleties of facial expression and less call for mere adjuncts. It is thus more subjective, more suggestive, appeals rather to the imagination than to the eye and affords a far more subtle study of character, in many respects; and the wonderful possibilities before it as a form of dramatic art are incalculable.⁹⁴

In short, the expressive aestheticians exerted a strong influence on Curry's concept of the process or means by which effective oral expression was accomplished. Like those aestheticians Curry turned to nature or the physical universe for the standards for the process of expression. From his study of nature Curry derived four such standards: (1) expression should be efferent, (2) expression should be spontaneous, (3) expression should be unified, and (4) expression should be free.

Furthermore, Curry's study of art led him to conclude that all expression proceeded in two ways: (1) by the symbolic "representation" of objective data and (2) by direct suggestion or "manifestation" of subjective emotional data.

IV. Message: The Role of the Imagination

The last element whose presence was necessary for oral expression to occur was the message to be communicated. In the

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 137.

case of the public speaker the message was his own ideas which he wished to convey to others. For the oral reader and the actor, however, the message consisted of the creation of the writer.

Curry believed that speaker, reader, and actor were all faced with the same problem, namely, the problem of realizing ideas (whether original or not) completely. For Curry the complete realization of ideas meant not only intellectual but emotional realization as well.

The full realization of ideas, Curry insisted, depended upon the faculty of the imagination. This faculty was as necessary to the speaker struggling to realize his own thoughts as it was to the reader trying to realize the thoughts of another.

We hear it continually said by students, "Oh, if I could only speak some of my own thoughts, or if I could talk about a scene that I saw, I could feel it," but this is a mistake, for the lack of imagination is apparent in speech as well as in recitation.⁹⁵

Despite this avowed interest in the public speaker, Curry discussed imagination primarily as that faculty whereby a reader could fully realize his recitation.

Curry's treatment of imagination is at once the most ambitious and the most confusing aspect of his theory. Much of his problem in Imagination and Dramatic Instinct derived

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 89.

from the fact that by Curry's day there were almost as many different concepts of imagination as there were expressionists. Perhaps for this very reason he declined to analyze imagination:

There will be here . . . no effort made to analyze this faculty; but certain illustrations will be given of some of its actions, so that its presence and the conditions of its exercise may be recognized.⁹⁶

Curry's problem was further complicated by the tendency of most aestheticians to regard imagination as a faculty of invention. Curry, on the other hand, had to adapt imagination to the needs of the oral reader who struggled not to create but to realize that which had been created. Nevertheless, Curry remained convinced that imagination was as necessary to the reader as it was to the poet. "Imagination," he wrote, "not only creates all art, but it appreciates art."⁹⁷

Early in Imagination Curry made two assertions about his subject matter. First, "imagination is the transcendent faculty of the human mind. It is a power by which the mind arrives at truth through an immediate process."⁹⁸ Although imagination was a mental faculty, it did not fall within the province of psychology which limited itself to the faculties of intellect, emotion, and will. Imagination for Curry was none of these. Instead, it seems to have been a faculty

⁹⁶Imagination, p. 24.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 24.

intermediate between the intellect and the emotion.⁹⁹

Second, the imagination of the student could be trained, and "the best method of developing the imagination is by the study of Nature [or the physical universe] and poetic expression [or art]."¹⁰⁰ "Nature alone, however, is inadequate to secure the full power of imagination."¹⁰¹ Consequently, the teacher should expose the student to art, and for Curry of all the arts "poetry is fullest of imaginative life and energy."¹⁰²

Curry emphasized these two characteristics of imagination because they demonstrated to his satisfaction that imagination was a natural human faculty which all people possessed, and not as "it is frequently considered an unnatural, if not an abnormal power . . . due to some accident of temperament peculiar to a few."¹⁰³ Furthermore, by utilizing the proper techniques the teacher could develop his student's imaginative faculty.

These characteristics of imagination were important to Curry because he believed imagination to be the only faculty whereby the speaker, the actor, or the oral reader could develop adequate oral expression. "Imagination is really necessary to expression. Power in expression fundamentally depends upon the power of the imagination."¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 92. ¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 11. ¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 13. ¹⁰³Ibid., p. 9. ¹⁰⁴Province, p. 89.

To this faculty which the student would use most in developing oral expression, Curry assigned four specific functions or uses. The first function of the imagination, he believed, was penetrative. When the student studied a poem, by the power of his imagination he could penetrate through the representative symbol to the idea which lay behind it:

Imagination . . . penetrates to the depth; it does not deal in external accidents and mechanical relations, but sees the heart of the object, or its relations, act, or character; it finds the elements and the cause in everything which it touches, and goes to the true fountain-head of expression.¹⁰⁵

Curry quoted John Ruskin throughout Imagination, and Ruskin may have been the source for Curry's ideas on the penetrative power of imagination. In Modern Painters Ruskin spoke of the Imagination Penetrative, and he wrote: "the imagination sees the heart and inner nature, and makes them felt."¹⁰⁶ "It never stops at crusts or ashes, or outward images of any kind; it ploughs them all aside, and plunges into the very central fiery heat."¹⁰⁷

The second function which Curry assigned to the imagination was actually an extension of the first function. Only by the operation of the imagination, wrote Curry, could the

¹⁰⁵Imagination, p. 68.

¹⁰⁶The Literary Criticism of John Ruskin, selected, ed. and with an intro. by Harold Bloom (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), p. 20.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 17.

student perceive the organic unity of the poem being read. The intellect, he insisted, could conceive individual ideas and images but never wholes. "Conception has reference to single objects or ideas: imagination to their relation":

An idea to be conceived is more or less isolated. Imagination, on the other hand, has a vision of an organic whole, composed of dissimilar objects or ideas. Imagination does not perceive mere fragments: it sees the whole at once.¹⁰⁸

Curry could have gleaned this concept of the imagination from almost any of the expressive aestheticians. Probably Coleridge had developed the concept of organic unity the farthest, and he had written in Biographia Literaria that imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify."¹⁰⁹ Imagination for Coleridge as for Curry was "the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect."¹¹⁰

The third function of the imagination was perhaps the most important to Curry's mind. Imagination served to stimulate emotion in the reader. Generalizations and abstractions could never produce emotion, he believed. "Feeling demands a specific picture, a living scene created by the sympathetic energies

¹⁰⁸Imagination, p. 25.

¹⁰⁹Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, I, 202.

¹¹⁰Ibid., II, 14.

of the soul."¹¹¹ Imagination was the "sympathetic" energy which he had in mind. Curry admitted that to some extent the reader would use memory to create the scene or situation which stimulated emotion, but "the imagination uses the material furnished by memory and creates a background."¹¹²

Furthermore, imagination stimulated emotion by converting the incidents and actions described in the material being read into "present realities; by it the distant is made near, the past made present."¹¹³

For the source of his ideas on this particular characteristic of imagination, Curry turned, quite uncharacteristically, to an eighteenth-century aesthetician, Lord Kames:

"It is by means of ideal presence," says Lord Kames, "that our passions are excited; and till words produce that charm, they avail nothing; even real events entitled to our belief must be conceived present and passing in our sight, before they can move us. . . . Even genuine history has no command over our passions but by ideal presence only."¹¹⁴

This is not to say that Curry was being in any way inconsistent with the beliefs of the expressive movement. The concept that imagination was that which produced emotion appeared in the writings of several expressive aestheticians. George Henry Lewes, whom Curry quoted several times in

¹¹¹Bible, p. 215.

¹¹²Imagination, p. 90.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 91-92.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

Imagination, defined that faculty as "the power of forming images,"¹¹⁵ and then added: "A work is imaginative in virtue of the power of its images over our emotions."¹¹⁶ He concluded his discussion of imagination by asserting that the whole purpose of the images of imagination was to "arouse in us memories of similar scenes, and kindle emotions of pleasurable experience."¹¹⁷

The final function of the imagination was to permit the reader to identify with either the poet or the speaker within the poem:

Imagination is the faculty which enables us to enter into sympathy with our fellow-men. By its power alone can we appreciate the point of view of those different from ourselves. Without imagination, each of us would be alone; each of us would be cold and selfish.¹¹⁸

Though this function of imagination was particularly important for the actor, according to Curry, it was equally important to the oral reader:

To read the words of the great prophets, we must live their lives, and realize their difficulties; we must feel, as they felt, that the liberty of the country was imperilled, that the sacred temple was in danger. We must hear with them the divine call. Before we

¹¹⁵George Henry Lewes, Principles of Success in Literature, with intro. and notes by Fred N. Scott, Ph.D. (3d ed.; Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1917), p. 65. Lewes' Principles first appeared as a series of essays published in The Fortnightly Review from May 15 to November 1, 1865. These essays were collected and published as a book by A. S. Cook in 1885.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 66. ¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁸Imagination, p. 9.

can interpret these sublime records and creations, our imagination must feel the hope which still burned in the hearts of men after long years of exile, and realize that faith that knelt in a foreign land and opened "a window toward Jerusalem."¹¹⁹

An earlier section of this chapter has called attention to Curry's belief that expression should reflect not only the emotions of the artist but the experience of the artist as well. The power of the imagination to identify with the poet made the expression of experience possible, for when the reader identified himself with the situation of another, he assimilated the experience of that other person and made it his own. Experience, wrote Curry, "implies going through and coming out of something. Accordingly, experience is the result of passing through and coming out of certain situations."¹²⁰

The concept of imagination as that faculty of mind which made identification possible was certainly not original with Curry. René Wellek traces this concept back to the eighteenth century where writers such as Burke and Blair regarded imagination as "the power of entering sympathetically into other people's feelings."¹²¹ In Province Curry intimated that he was familiar with many of Shelley's essays,¹²² and in Shelley's most famous

¹¹⁹Bible, p. 223. ¹²⁰Imagination, p. 193.

¹²¹René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, Vol. I: The Later Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 111.

¹²²Province, p. 71.

essay, "A Defence of Poetry," the poet had observed:

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food.¹²³

Because Curry insisted that the faculty of imagination was of vital importance to the reader, he devoted much space in Imagination to the presentation of exercises for the development of that faculty. Although Curry referred to these exercises as "psychic," they differ sharply from those "psychic" exercises which he had derived from his study of psychology.¹²⁴ Curry divided his psychic exercises for the development of the imagination into two groups. The first group of exercises serves to make the student aware of the operations of his imaginative faculty. There are twenty-two exercises in this group, and the order of presentation is random.

The first four exercises in this group call the student's attention to the difference between mere intellectual realization or "conception" of a poem and the full imaginative realization of the poem. These exercises are as follows:

¹²³Shelley, p. 356.

¹²⁴See pp. 128-133 of this study.

PROBLEM I. Read a passage with definite, vivid conceptions, but without imaginative action; and then read the same with vivid conceptions related to one another by the imagination, and note the difference in effect upon the voice.

PROBLEM II. Read an imaginative passage with definite, clear, but isolated conceptions, and notice how the spirit of the passage is degraded.

PROBLEM III. Read a beautiful passage with, and then without, any background, and note the difference in expression.

PROBLEM IV. Distinguish between analytic and synthetic actions of the mind, and their effect upon the voice.¹²⁵

Many of the exercises and discussions which follow are designed to call the student's attention to subtle distinctions between imagination and other mental faculties. These exercises touch upon the differences between "imaginative attention" and "analytic attention," "imagination and memory," "imagination and science," and "imagination and fancy."¹²⁶

Having isolated the imaginative faculty, Curry proceeded to illustrate the functions or "actions" of the imagination with another exercise, these functions being: (1) to penetrate to the basic idea being expressed in the poem, (2) to discover the organic unity of the poem, (3) to stimulate emotion in the reader, and (4) to enable the reader to identify with the speaker in the poem.¹²⁷

¹²⁵Imagination, p. 27. ¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 29-64.

¹²⁷Here, as elsewhere, Curry's discussions are more impressive than his exercises. For all these different "actions" of imagination, for example, Curry presented but a single exercise: "Read a variety of passages, and exercise the many diverse actions of the imagination." (Imagination, p. 71.)

Finally, Curry directed the student's attention to the effects of the imagination upon the voice. According to Curry the imaginative realization of a poem would influence touch, pause, tone-color, and change of pitch.¹²⁸

The second section of Imagination is designed to exercise the imaginative faculty as a critical tool to be used in the full realization of a poem. The section opens with a development of the thesis that imagination made it possible for the reader to experience all the incidents described in his recitation. The first exercise of this section reads: "In a simple sequence of conceptions reproduce all the actions of the mind and feeling which would result if we had ourselves been a participant in the events and scenes which are recorded in words."¹²⁹

This first exercise is indicative of all those which follow, for throughout this second section Curry contended that "the real cause of genuine experience in oratorical delivery or dramatic expression, is the identification of the speaker or reader with the thought or situation."¹³⁰ Though the exercises and discussions which follow introduce a host of topics and terms, all turn around Curry's contention that imagination resulted in identification. Thus, whether Curry was distinguishing between "imitation" and "assimilation"¹³¹ or "personation" and

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 161-77. ¹²⁹Ibid., p. 195.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 199. ¹³¹Ibid., pp. 220-25.

"participation,"¹³² he had in mind the difference between an unimaginative reading in which the reader fails to identify with the scene and an imaginative reading in which the experiences described in the recitation become the experiences of the reader.

Disorganized and confusing as these "psychic exercises" of the imagination are, their importance should not be underestimated. For perhaps the first time in the history of oral interpretation, these exercises and discussions entertain the belief that oral reading demands a complete emotional as well as intellectual understanding of the material being read.

V. Summary

Eleven years after Curry's death in 1921, Wayland Maxfield Parrish published one of the most widely adopted textbooks in the history of oral interpretation. In the preface the author wrote: "Interpretation has less to learn, I believe, from current psychological theories, than from aesthetics and literary criticism."¹³³ Judging from the influence of aesthetics upon Curry's work, this point of view was less than revolutionary.

Curry's discussions of the speaker, the listener, the process, and the message in oral expression all reflect the

¹³²Ibid., pp. 260-63.

¹³³Wayland Maxfield Parrish, Reading Aloud: A Technique in the Interpretation of Literature (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1932), p. 6.

influence of the expressive aestheticians. Like those aestheticians Curry believed that the artist was the most important single element in oral expression. This meant that for Curry oral expression or delivery should have as its only goal the accurate reflection of the speaker, his personality, his character and his experience. He applied this belief to the reader as well as to the speaker, for Curry believed that effective oral reading was possible only when the events and scenes described in the recitation became part of the experience and personality of the reader.

The second element, the audience, was for both Curry and the aestheticians he so frequently quoted the least important element. Delivery, Curry insisted, should not be deliberately manipulated to conform to the dictates of an audience. Though Curry admitted that delivery would differ from large to small audiences, he did not advocate a study of audience in the development of oral expression. Instead, he urged his students to expand their delivery only by intensifying their own inner convictions and impressions.

The third element, the process or means of oral expression, was important to Curry. Like the expressive aestheticians Curry believed that the process of expression should conform to the process by which the natural world expressed itself. Nature, Curry warned, did not contain products to be imitated, but rather, processes to be adopted. The processes or methods of

nature, in Curry's view, possessed four fundamental characteristics:

- (1) they operated from within outward, (2) they were spontaneous,
- (3) they were unified, and (4) they were free.

Curry believed that only two means of expression conformed to these characteristics of nature. He called those means "manifestation" and "representation." "Representation" Curry described as the indirect expression of factual objective data by arbitrary symbols. "Manifestation," he declared, was the direct suggestion by voice and pantomime of the subjective emotional states of the speaker, reader, or actor. The best art, Curry asserted, utilized both processes though manifestation should predominate.

In the study of delivery the reader should distinguish between representation and manifestation, emphasizing the latter whenever possible. Since the highest ideals of art could not be represented symbolically, the reader when conscious of them would always stress the manifestive or suggestive elements in his delivery.

The final element in oral expression was the message itself. Curry believed that the message, whether the speaker's ideas or the ideas of a writer, could only be expressed when it became a part of the speaker's own personality. This total integration of message and speaker, he insisted, depended on the faculty of imagination. The imagination, though a subtle mental faculty which eluded close definition, could be trained, nevertheless. Imagination, as Curry described it, was the

process whereby the reader penetrated to the manifestive element in a work of art; comprehended the organic unity of the work of art; developed emotions within himself; and identified the reader with the poet, the character, or the scene represented in the poem. To insure that the student could both understand and utilize the imagination, Curry presented a series of "psychic" exercises designed to train this all-important faculty.

With the exception of a few isolated instances it is impossible to pinpoint with any accuracy the sources of these ideas of Curry. Nonetheless, almost all these ideas found their origin and their most complete development within the expressive movement in aesthetics--a movement which began with the Romantic revolution against pragmatic aesthetics, extended through much of the Victorian period, and culminated in the early twentieth century in the aesthetic theory of Benedetto Croce.

CHAPTER VI

CURRY'S DEBT TO ELOCUTION

Thus far, this study has underscored Curry's remarkable ability to find in other disciplines material relevant to the problems of expression. For the development of vocal and physical techniques or skill, however, Curry turned to the theories of the elocutionists. Here his problem was to avoid the pitfalls which he believed had led his predecessors astray, and at the same time, to incorporate into his own method whatever had been valid in the elocutionary movement. For all the elocutionists' faults Curry believed that they had been fundamentally sound when they had stressed that "the voice and body are given to man as crude possibilities, which must be disciplined and trained for their work."¹

The purpose of this chapter is to explain Curry's method for developing skills in delivery by tracing the influence of the elocutionists on Curry's thought. The first section presents Curry's treatment of those elocutionary systems which had preceded his own. The second section discusses those

¹Province, p. 252.

elocutionists of his own day who exerted a strong influence on Curry. The last section presents the method Curry used to develop vocal and physical skills in his students.

I. Elocutionary Forerunners

Curry's publications contain a careful analysis of most of the famous elocutionists who preceded him. Curry's analysis reflects a determined effort on his part to weed out what had been fallacious in the elocutionary movement and to preserve what had been valid.

Curry's Objections to His Forerunners

Curry's criticisms of the elocutionary methods for developing vocal and physical skill are important because they reveal a set of negative criteria against which Curry measured the value of his own program for technical improvement in delivery.

Curry's opinions of his predecessors are easily summarized, for he presented them clearly and systematically in Province. Curry began his discussion by observing that "there is a tendency . . . in a historic method, to become too conservative--to regard the past too highly,"² a fault of which Curry was hardly guilty. He divided his subject into four divisions or "schools" as he called them. These schools

²Ibid., p. 293.

were the imitative, the mechanical, the impulsive, and the speculative. He then proceeded to devote one chapter to each school. In each case Curry based his criticism on principles derived from his investigations into philology, psychology, aesthetics and education.

The Imitative School

According to Curry, the French were the most famous practitioners of this method of teaching technique. The famous School of Declamation for the training of actors in Paris relied almost exclusively upon this method, he testified. Curry recognized only two outstanding figures in this movement: Joseph Sampson, who had taught at the Conservatoire, and Regnier, the leading actor in the Comédie Française and director of the School of Declamation. Curry mentioned Sampson only once, though he called the Frenchman the greatest teacher that had ever taught in the Conservatoire. Since Sampson died in 1871³ while Curry was still living in Tennessee, it is probable that the expressionist knew of Sampson's work by reputation only. Sampson had published some of his ideas on acting, however, in a long poem, L'Art théâtral, in 1863,⁴ and Curry may have been familiar with this work.

³Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (eds.), Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the Great Actors of All Times as Told in Their Own Words, with introductions and biographical notes (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), p. 186.

⁴Ibid.

The connection between Curry and Regnier was less tenuous. After receiving the Ph.D. from Boston University in 1880, Curry traveled to Paris where he studied the methods used by Regnier at the School of Declamation. In 1882 Curry again returned to Paris and to the School of Declamation.⁵

Although Curry did not present any detailed explanation of what the imitative method was, his understanding of it seems to be that imitation was that method of teaching delivery whereby the student copied either the teacher or a highly skilled actor, reader, or public speaker.

According to Curry, the validity of the imitative method rested upon four arguments: First, the authority of the ancients, particularly Aristotle, who contended that all art was based upon imitation proved the need for this method.⁶ Second, because delivery was so complex, the teacher had to rely on imitation:

In a mystic art like delivery, where so much is subjective, the only way to get at the subject, they say, is by imitation. All art requires example, and in delivery the only way is for one man to speak a sentence by way of example, and to have the pupil follow by imitation. The art is too subtle for analysis, hence there is no way to improve it except by direct or indirect imitation. By direct imitation the pupil is made to do exactly as the teacher does. By indirect imitation the teacher chiefly imitates the faults of the pupil, imitating and showing what the pupil is to avoid.⁷

⁵Province, p. 302. ⁶Ibid., p. 301.

⁷Ibid.

Third, the limitations of the written word as a vehicle for the communication of a technique for delivery meant that only imitation could preserve any tradition in the field:

Since methods for the development of delivery can never be given in writing, the traditions regarding the art must ever be of fundamental importance. Hence, a most popular method, especially in studying for the stage, is to give to students the traditions of how leading actors and artists spoke, and have them execute these by imitation.⁸

And fourth, the tendency of children to learn by imitation proved that imitation was a natural method of instruction.

Curry dealt with these arguments in different ways. He did not bother to refute the first argument concerning the authority of the ancients in his chapter on imitation. Elsewhere, however, he argued that the imitative school had misrepresented the ancients. Though the ancients believed in imitation, Curry insisted, they prescribed the imitation of nature, and to them nature was a "process" not a "product." One might imitate nature's methods but not any specific object or person in nature.⁹

Nor did Curry deal with the second argument in the chapter on imitation. Indeed, Curry accepted the belief that the process of delivery was a mystic one. He himself declared that in the case of delivery "we feel that there is something mystic

⁸Ibid., p. 302.

⁹Imagination, p. 221. See pp. 150-53 of this study for Curry's understanding of the terms "process" and "product."

and hidden . . . often only vaguely felt by ourselves."¹⁰ But to Curry this did not justify the use of imitation. Though delivery was mystic, it was still subject to more rational methods of development than imitation. "Man has no faculty or power in his nature that is not capable of education. The higher the faculty, the more susceptible it is to training."¹¹

Nowhere did Curry treat the third argument, that techniques of delivery eluded the power of words,¹² but he did deal with the fourth argument in the chapter on imitation. To Curry's mind the imitators had overemphasized the role of imitation in the development of children. They had done so, he believed, because they confused the operations of the "imitative instinct" with those of the "dramatic instinct." In the case of "dramatic instinct" or "assimilation," "the child simply endeavors under the quickening power of imagination, to enter into sympathy with all life around him."¹³ Occasionally, though not so often, children would use their imitative instinct, but this was mere mimicry of "accidental and odd characteristics." Mimicry resulted only in "the evolution of the eye," Curry argued, but dramatic instinct, an imaginative process, caused the evolution

¹⁰Province, p. 24. ¹¹Ibid., pp. 232-33.

¹²As the author of thirteen textbooks and countless articles and reviews, perhaps he felt the product of these labors would either prove or disprove this contention of the teachers of imitation.

¹³Province, p. 304.

"of the mind."¹⁴ In other words, though children would occasionally "imitate" or mime the physical characteristics of others, they did not learn anything by this process. A child would learn, Curry argued, only when he "assimilates" the characteristics of others into his own personality. For example, a child might imitate the sounds that he heard his parents make, but he learned nothing from the process. Not until he grasped the meaning behind these sounds or what Curry called "insight into . . . motives"¹⁵ did learning take place. This second process depended upon the child's "dramatic instinct." Thus, the process by which children learn was not a validation but a refutation of the imitative method.

But Curry did more than simply refute the arguments of the imitative school. He also insisted that any art based upon imitation could result only in mediocrity. To convince his readers of this belief, Curry quoted John Ruskin's Modern Painters:

Mr. Ruskin has said regarding art: "These ideas and pleasures"--those received from imitation--"are the most contemptible which can be received from art; first, because it is necessary to their enjoyment that the mind should reject the impression and address of the thing represented, and fix itself only upon the reflection that it is not what it seems to be. . . . Ideas of imitation are contemptible in the second place, because not only do they preclude the spectator from enjoying inherent beauty in the subject, but they can only be received from mean and paltry subjects, because it is impossible to imitate anything really great. . . . Thirdly, these

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 304-05.

¹⁵Imagination, p. 10.

ideas are contemptible, because no ideas of power are associated with them; to the ignorant, imitation indeed seems difficult, and its success praiseworthy, but even they can by no possibility see more in the artist than they do in the juggler, who arrives at a strange end by means with which they are unacquainted."¹⁶

Finally, Curry argued, imitation assumed that all men were basically the same when in reality "every personality is different." Imitation, therefore, actually worked against the development of art, since "imitation of another always dwarfs personality,"¹⁷ and personality, Curry insisted, was the fundamental element of all great art.

The Mechanical School

Curry reserved his strongest criticism for those elocutionists whom he designated as mechanical, perhaps because in England and America many of these elocutionists were famous teachers of delivery. According to Curry, the principal figures in this school were Sheridan, Walker, Austin, Rush, Murdoch, and Russell,¹⁸ though Curry believed that the roots of the system went back as far as Quintilian.¹⁹

The salient characteristic of the mechanical method of teaching delivery, according to Curry,

is to proceed from analysis of the mechanism of speech--from the nature of the modulations of the

¹⁶John Ruskin, Modern Painters, quoted in Province, pp. 305-06.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 310-25.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 154-56.

voice, such as inflection or stress, or the like, and to lay down rules for the proper rendering of thought and passion.²⁰

Curry believed that in English elocution the mechanical school had begun as a reaction against imitation. Sheridan and Walker, he said, "each earnestly sought for a method which would be independent of imitation,"²¹ and along with Austin they had turned to the classical period for their inspiration.²² Curry devoted little of his attention to Sheridan and Walker for to his mind they were "not literally followed by any one" in his own day.²³

The influence of Austin, though waning, was apparently still present in Curry's time, however, for "the evils of his work are still found in school exhibitions."²⁴ Though "Austin prided himself upon having discovered a system for the notation of gesture," his system was so one-sided that "little or no attention was given to positions and attitudes, the most fundamental and important part of Pantomime, but all was made to center in motions or gestures."²⁵

But it was for Rush and his followers that Curry reserved his strongest criticisms. Even the "mechanical" Walker, Curry observed, had not enshrined "rules" so much

²⁰Ibid., p. 310. ²¹Ibid. ²²Ibid., p. 311.

²³Ibid. ²⁴Ibid., p. 312. ²⁵Ibid., p. 311.

as had Rush. "Rush contended that the qualities of the voice, as well as the stresses and inflections, could be so regulated by rule, that the expression of every passion could be indicated definitely, and even printed as a score like music."²⁶ As a result of Rush's influence, "for fifty years our elocution has . . . been chiefly concerned with the acquirement of an artificial tone,--called so by the teachers themselves, and claimed as an improvement upon natural tone."²⁷

The following arguments formed the basis of Curry's attack on the mechanical school. First, though the system claimed to be based on nature, it was mostly concerned with "accidental" or subordinate activity in delivery. The mechanical school emphasized "accidental" vocal activity, for example, when it made no distinction between normal and abnormal qualities of the voice." To prove this point, Curry cited a long passage from Murdoch who had asserted that the guttural quality of voice was "an element of speech of a strongly marked and expressive nature."²⁸ Curry concluded: "With such suggestion it is no wonder that elocutionary study often causes sore throats."²⁹ By the opposite standard, the mechanical school often ignored

²⁶Ibid., p. 312.

²⁷Ibid., p. 313.

²⁸James E. Murdoch, Analytic Elocution, quoted in Ibid., p. 315.

²⁹Ibid., p. 316.

such "fundamental" or primary activity in delivery as poise and "attitude" or muscle tone.³⁰

Second, though the mechanical system claimed to be scientific, it had actually ignored the findings of Lotze, Bain, and other nineteenth-century scientists that in the control of voice and body the will or volition played only a minor role. Yet, Rush and his followers, according to Curry, persisted in their belief that by the power of volition alone the speaker could make certain "signs of emotion" which would result in effective oral communication. In normal communication, Curry insisted, the speaker did not concentrate on either the "signs of emotion" or the rules for producing them:

Such a course is not in accord with the action of the mind in conversation. If a man in conversation is ever conscious of the inflections, stresses and above all, of the color of his voice, it is in a very secondary way, and is generally caused by ill-health or some misuse of the mechanism. Normally the mind must ever be centered upon its train of ideas, and any art that prevents this is false to nature and will end in superficiality.³¹

Third, the mechanical school also violated the principles of education. By concentrating the student's attention upon the "signs of emotion," the mechanists stood in direct antipathy to recent reforms in educational methods:

Instead of mind being focused upon successive ideas and reproducing them, all is centered upon the performance of successive signs. This any one can see, is a violation of Pestalozzi's principle--"the

³⁰Ibid., p. 311.

³¹Ibid., p. 318.

thing, not its sign," and, in fact, of every principle of true education.³²

The Impulsive School

Curry was probably closer to the impulsive school than he was to either the imitative or mechanical schools. Certainly his criticisms of the impulsive school were far milder than those he launched against the others. In Province Curry recognized only one great figure in the impulsive school--Richard Whately. Though objections to the imitative and mechanical schools existed earlier than Whately, Curry wrote, "no criticism of any consequence appeared or was put into any definite form until Archbishop Whately published his Rhetoric in 1825 [sic]."³³ Curry believed the influence of Whately to have been profound for "since his book, no work upon rhetoric has given any attention whatever to delivery."³⁴

Much of Curry's treatment of the impulsive school

³²Ibid., pp. 317-18.

³³Ibid., p. 326. Whately's Rhetoric was published in 1828.

³⁴Ibid. Curry was incorrect here. Matthew Boyd Hope's Princeton Textbook in Rhetoric, published in 1859, contains a treatment of delivery squarely based on the principles of Rush and Austin, though it is true that the most popular rhetorics (e.g. Henry N. Day's Elements of the Art of Rhetoric /1850/, A. S. Hill's Principles of Rhetoric /1878/, and Genung's The Practical Elements of Rhetoric /1886/) do ignore delivery. See John P. Hoshor, "American Contributions to Rhetorical Theory and Homiletics," History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), pp. 129-49.

consisted of a detailed summary of Whately's attacks on the mechanical school. Not until the end of the chapter did Curry describe the method of teaching delivery advocated by those of the impulsive school. Here he let Whately speak for himself:

"The practical rule, then, to be adopted in conformity with the principles here maintained is, not only to pay no studied attention to the voice, but studiously to withdraw the thoughts from it, and to dwell as intently as possible on the sense, trusting to nature to suggest spontaneously the proper emphases and tones. He who not only understands fully what he is reading, but is earnestly occupying his mind with the matter of it, will be likely to read as if he understood it, and thus to make others understand it; and in like manner, with a view to the impressiveness of the delivery, he who not only feels it, but is exclusively absorbed with that feeling, will be likely to read as if he felt it, and to communicate the impression to his hearers. But this can not be the case if he is occupied with the thought of what their opinion will be of his reading, and how his voice ought to be regulated--if, in short, he is thinking of himself, and, of course, in the same degree abstracting his attention from that which ought to occupy it exclusively."³⁵

Curry's criticism of Whately's system was relatively mild. He noted that the system had frequently been attacked, mentioning the efforts of Vandenhoff and Zachos,³⁶ but he

³⁵Whately, Elements of Rhetoric, quoted in Province, p. 331.

³⁶Curry was probably referring to two works on elocution: John C. Zachos, The New American Speaker: A Collection of Oratorical and Dramatic Pieces, Soliloquies, and Dialogues, with an Original Introductory Essay on the Elements of Elocution (Cincinnati: W. W. Derby and Co., 1851); and George Vandenhoff, The Art of Elocution, as an Essential Part of Rhetoric: With Instructions in Gesture; and an Appendix of Oratorical, Poetical, and Dramatic Extracts (London: Sampson, Low, Sun and Co., 1867).

dismissed these criticisms without explanation. "None of the answers have, in my judgment, been effective."³⁷

Curry himself raised two objections to Whately's system. First, he objected, no one had been able to devise an adequate method for converting Whately's principles into useful and workable classroom instruction. According to Curry, two attempts had been made, but Curry believed that both had failed. One such attempt Curry called "the homiletic method." In this teaching method after the student had spoken, the teacher presented "very long criticisms upon their [the students'] needs, that they may know their faults so as to think of them at the time of delivery and correct them by conscious avoidance." Whatever the virtues of this method, Curry argued, it adapted Whately's system to the classroom only by distortion, since "attention to the modes of delivery at the time of speaking" was precisely what Whately sought to avoid.³⁸

³⁷Province, p. 332. Curry's dismissal of Vandenhoff was unfair. Among Vandenhoff's criticisms of Whately is the following: "It is clear, that it is not always enough to leave nature to herself." When students with bad habits adopt Whately's system, "they confirm themselves in the practice of a vicious habit." (Vandenhoff, p. 8.) Not only is this precisely the same argument which Curry used against Whately (see Province, p. 333.), but is an argument still leveled against Whately in the twentieth century. (See Wayland Maxfield Parrish, "Whately on Elocution," The Rhetorical Idiom: Essays in Rhetoric, Oratory, Language, and Drama, Presented to Herbert August Wichelns, with a Reprinting of His "Literary Criticism of Oratory" [1925], ed. Donald C. Bryant [Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958], p. 51.)

³⁸Ibid.

Another attempt to adapt Whately to the classroom Curry dubbed "the sentimental" method. According to Curry, the sentimentalists would have the students come to class and "meditate over certain great themes, and absorb the spirit of delivery." At no time did the students perform themselves. "They are to do no work at all, but simply to sit and listen and absorb."³⁹ Such a method, though it preserved Whately's fundamental belief that the student should ignore delivery while speaking, was "too ridiculous to need any discussion."⁴⁰

Curry's second criticism of Whately was that the rhetorician had ignored the problem of habit. Whately's system would work only if the student "were normal, if all the channels of expression were open, and if man were free from bad habits."⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., p. 333. ⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid. Contrary to Curry's understanding, Whately had not ignored this problem entirely. Indeed, Whately advocated special consideration for students with "abnormal conditions": "But if any one spontaneously falls into any gestures that are unbecoming, care should then be taken to break the habit; and that, not only in public speaking, but on all occasions. The case, indeed, is the same with utterance: if any one has, in common discourse, an indistinct, hesitating, provincial, or otherwise faulty delivery, his Natural manner certainly is not what he should adopt in public speaking; but he should endeavour, by care, to remedy the defect, not in public speaking only, but in ordinary conversation also. And so also, with respect to attitudes and gestures. It is in these points, principally, if not exclusively, that the remarks of an intelligent friend will be beneficial." (Richard Whately, Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution, ed. Douglas Ehninger with a foreword by David Potter /photo-offset reprint of 7th British ed., 1846; Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963/, p. 389.)

The Speculative School

Curry devoted more space to the "speculative school" or Delsartism than all the others he chose to review in Province. There were a number of reasons for this emphasis. For one thing, Delsartism was extremely popular at the time Curry was writing. Werner's Magazine, a widely-read elocutionary journal, was publishing a spate of articles by various authorities on Delsartism throughout the 1880's and 90's.⁴² For another, Curry had studied for several years under Steele MacKaye, popularly regarded as the outstanding authority on Delsarte. Therefore, Curry felt he could speak with some authority on Delsartism. Finally, although "Delsarte never published anything himself,"⁴³ a number of his disciples had published descriptions of the Delsarte system. Since these descriptions were often contradictory, Curry may have felt a detailed discussion of the system was warranted.

Curry began his explanation of Delsartism by divorcing himself from the speculative school. "I have studied it for many years," he wrote, "but a part of it I never believed and I have grown further and further away from the part I did believe, with every year of increased experience."⁴⁴ According to Curry,

⁴²See Francine Merritt, "Werner's Magazine: Pioneer Speech Journal" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1953), pp. 142-70.

⁴³Province, p. 335. ⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 336-37.

his own understanding of Delsartism came chiefly from his studies under L. B. Monroe and Steele MacKaye, although he also claimed to have studied under every known student of Delsarte.⁴⁵

Despite his professed familiarity with Delsarte's method, Curry's explanation sheds little light on the subject. The fundamental element of Delsartism, according to Curry, was the concept of trinity. "Everything in its elements is a trinity," though "different teachers have presented the system in different ways." Monroe, for example, believed the fundamental trinity to be God's attributes, love, wisdom, and power. Other disciples began with other elements such as God, man, and the world, or time, space, and motion.⁴⁶

Though Delsartism had as its principal aim an explanation of the universe, the Delsartians claimed it could be adapted to the needs of the student of oral expression, for just as the fundamental elements of the universe represented a trinity, so did the elements of delivery form a trinity.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 337. Some of the Delsartians apparently were not impressed with Dr. Curry's credentials. The caustic Genevieve Stebbins wrote: "I am afraid Mr. Curry was not intended by his Maker to understand Delsarte." (Delsarte System of Expression [6th ed.; New York: Edgar S. Werner Publishing and Supply Co., 1902], p. 394.)

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 337-38.

Though Curry did not explain how the Delsartians made the step from universal considerations to those of expression, one can speculate on this step from the few remarks Curry did make upon the subject. As noted above, one of the fundamental trinitities explaining the universe was God, man, and the world. According to Delsartism, each of these elements in turn had to consist of a trinity, and the three fundamental elements of man apparently were mind, soul, and vital nature.⁴⁷

The next step led directly to the province of expression, but to understand this step requires consideration of Emanuel Swedenborg's influence. According to Curry some of Delsarte's followers "have said that Delsarte was a very earnest student of Swedenborg's writings, though we have no absolute testimony on this head."⁴⁸ Nevertheless, said Curry, L. B. Monroe definitely had studied Swedenborg and had arrived at a system similar to that of Delsarte before ever hearing of the Frenchman.⁴⁹

Briefly, Swedenborg had argued, rather Platonically, that whatever existed on the spiritual or "psychic" plane had some correspondent entity on the physical or "organic" plane. This belief is generally referred to as Swedenborg's "Doctrine of Correspondence."⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 339. How the Delsartians arrived at these particular attributes, Curry did not explain.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 338.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰George Trobridge, Swedenborg: Life and Teaching (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1951), pp. 151-52.

The Delsartians, in turn, believed that each of the three vital elements of man (the mind, the soul, and the "vital nature"⁵¹) was a spiritual or "psychic" element. By applying Swedenborg's Doctrine of Correspondence, they claimed to have discovered corresponding elements on the physical plane. Indeed, whether derived from Swedenborg or not, it "was Delsarte's belief that the Psychic and Organic were in perfect correspondence." Thus, the Delsartians arrived at the three fundamental elements of delivery: speech or the spoken word, pantomime or bodily movement, and tone. "Speech is the manifestation of mind or man's reason; pantomime, of the soul or the spiritual nature; and tone, of the vital nature; each principle of being having thus a special language in manifestation."⁵²

Given the Delsartians' passion for trinities and their belief in the Doctrine of Correspondence, the numerical possibilities of the speculative system were infinite. Curry indicated as much when he explained Delsarte's "law of nine-fold accord" or "law of intertwining" (Circumintercession). This law stated that though anything might be divided into three elements each separate element still carried something

⁵¹Curry frequently used the terms "life" and "life force" synonymously with "vital nature."

⁵²Province, p. 339.

of the other two elements with it.⁵³ To use a specific example of this law, one might isolate one of man's elements, say the soul, yet, the other two elements, mind and life, would still be present in the isolated soul.

When the Delsartians applied the Doctrine of Correspondence to physical phenomena, they also employed "the law of intertwining." Thus, pantomime, the physical counterpart of the soul, also could express to a lesser degree the elements of mind and life. The Delsartians believed that while the torso expressed the soul, the head expressed the mind, and the limbs expressed life. Curry's explanation of the law of intertwining is as follows:

The whole body may be divided by the law of "the nine-fold accord", [sic] or "law of intertwining" (circumintercession), according to the significance of each part in expression. Each of these is also a zone of expression, so that when the hand rests upon any of these it indicates "the principle of being predominating in activity at the time". [sic] Thus, too, when the gesture of the hand or arm starts from any part, "the point of departure indicates the principle of being whose predominating activity causes the gesture."⁵⁴

Curry's explanation of "the law of intertwining" is at best

⁵³Personal interview on May 4, 1966, with Claude L. Shaver, author of "Steele MacKaye and the Delsartian Tradition," History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), pp. 202-18.

⁵⁴Province, p. 344.

sketchy. Perhaps he felt that any further explanation of Delsarte's system should come from Steele MacKaye himself, and therefore avoided a more detailed explanation. At any rate, he devoted the rest of his chapter to a criticism of Delsarte and his followers.

Curry's criticism has a tendency to be tautological, though he presented his objections to the speculative school as separate arguments. "In the first place," he wrote, Delsartism "is artificial. . . . The mind, the body and nature are searched, not for truth, but for something to fit into an ingenious and artificial mould."⁵⁵

"In the second place, it is a system," and by this term Curry meant "a series of facts built upon a mechanical plan."⁵⁶ The counterpart to the term "system" in Curry's vocabulary is "method." a "method," he insisted, was "a mode of accomplishing a result" and was always "founded upon the study of nature." A "system," on the other hand, was merely an "orderly arrangement of facts to suit the convenience and purpose of man."⁵⁷

"In the third place, that there are an infinite number of threes no one can doubt, but the system is not founded upon truth; it is not true that everything is fundamentally

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 346. ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 347. ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 348.

a trinity."⁵⁸

Curry's next two criticisms were less redundant than those described above, for his fourth objection was that Delsartism placed an "exaggerated estimate . . . upon pantomime."⁵⁹ Delsartians, said Curry, believed that "if pantomime is right, the voice must be right."⁶⁰ As a criticism of the American Delsartians Curry's observation was probably an accurate one, judging by the explanations of Delsartism in Werner's Magazine and the lecture notes of Steele MacKaye. Curry's charge probably is not applicable to Delsarte himself, for after examining the latter's lecture notes, Claude Shaver has concluded: "It seems unlikely that Delsarte placed any more emphasis on the physical aspects of his system than on the vocal."⁶¹

Curry's last criticism of the speculative school was possibly his most serious charge. "Delsarte made all training and all practice of expression too much an end, and not a means."⁶² It will be recalled that Curry divided the subject of expression into three units, "cause," "means," and "effect." Any method or system, Curry argued, should serve only to give the reader control over the "means" of expression. But Delsarte and his followers, Curry objected, had made "means" or

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 349. ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 352. ⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Shaver, p. 205.

⁶²Province, p. 352.

mastery of technique the goal or end to be sought by the student of expression.

Summary

Curry's objections to elocutionary theory reflect definite criteria which he believed any method for developing delivery should meet. His criticism of the imitative school was based on the belief that elocution should regard each student as a distinct personality requiring a teaching method which would suit the student's individual needs. Furthermore, development in delivery should proceed "from within outward." In other words, training had to begin with the student's mental faculties. Finally, the method should result in a higher and more worthy effect than mere imitation.

Curry used some of these same standards in judging the mechanical school. He emphasized that the method for teaching delivery should concentrate upon "fundamental" actions, but he also asserted that the method ought to preserve the spontaneous impulses of the artist. Spontaneity for Curry operated independently from the will. By reducing everything to rules, the mechanical school, he argued, had overemphasized the role of the will. Curry's own study of psychology had convinced him that many of the elements in delivery could never be subjected to the will, and hence, the introduction of rules into the classroom would be at best only a partial aid to the student.

If Curry argued that the mechanical school placed too little faith in spontaneity, he believed just the opposite of the impulsive school. Though spontaneity should be encouraged, he felt it could not control all the factors in delivery. Students too often had developed bad speaking habits and "abnormalities." These habits could only be overcome by focusing the student's attention upon them. Thus, though it was incorrect to believe that the will could control all factors, it was equally fallacious to deny the function of the will completely.

Curry's comments on the speculative school reflect three additional criteria for teaching delivery. First, the method used ought to be based on nature's processes. It could not be an artificial scheme superimposed upon its subject matter. Second, the method had to be well rounded. Any method which concentrated upon only one aspect of delivery such as pantomime would never result in effective delivery. And last, no method should ever become an end in itself. A method should be simply a teaching procedure for developing control over the "means" of communication. A method should never become the "effect" of communication, for the latter should be the "revelation of man's psychic nature through his physical organism."⁶³ The study of technique was valuable,

⁶³Ibid., p. 24.

he said, only as it resulted in the accomplishment of this goal.

Curry's Favorable Comments
on Elocution

Though Curry attacked the fundamental principles of each of the "schools" of elocution which preceded expression, he believed that each school had made a valuable contribution to the teaching of delivery. Though he believed that his own method was unique, he also regarded it as a synthesis of the best results of elocutionary theory which had preceded his own.

Despite its faults each important school of elocution had had at least a glimpse of the truth. "It must be remembered," Curry wrote, "that there is truth in every one of these methods."⁶⁴ Though he abhorred teaching by imitation, Curry did confess that, "to a certain extent, every great teacher must give illustrations directly through his own voice."⁶⁵ Though Curry objected to the student imitating anyone, he did believe that "impulses toward art, and especially toward expression, are awakened from observing expression in others."⁶⁶

There is some doubt that Curry himself ever gave reading performances in public, but he felt strongly that the presence of good professional readers could be a

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 361.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 301-02.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 361.

valuable asset in the teaching of delivery. One of Curry's favorite readers was his teacher at Monroe's School of Oratory--J. Wesley Churchill. When Churchill abandoned the platform in 1896, Curry wrote in Expression magazine: "The simplicity, the intuitive and artistic interpretation, the sympathetic and helpful renderings which he has given upon the platform, have been of untold value in the elevation of this work."⁶⁷ For his own students Curry frequently attempted to obtain good readers to perform at the School of Expression. Among others, Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, Leland Powers, and Churchill himself read for Curry's classes.⁶⁸

The mechanical school also had made an important contribution to delivery, Curry declared. Thanks largely to the pioneering labors of Rush, "men have been set to observe more carefully the phenomena of speech."⁶⁹ And elsewhere Curry wrote:

The truth in the mechanical method is that the elemental vocal actions must be studied, that there must be analysis of the mechanism of speech. The mechanical nature of faults must be understood. The ear of the teacher must be quick to note the specific form of every fault, and able to meet the

⁶⁷[Curry], "Conference on Vocal Training and Expression," Expression, II (September, 1896), 221.

⁶⁸"Chair of Dramatic Expression Endowed by Sir Henry Irving," Ibid., III (September, 1897), 401; "The Star of Honor Conferred upon Professor Churchill," Ibid., IV (December, 1897), 27-28.

⁶⁹Province, p. 325.

fault directly and indirectly mechanically, when necessary, as well as from the eradication of its causes.⁷⁰

The impulsive school had made a contribution in quite another direction. Whately had brought to light a fundamental truth concerning the teaching of delivery, namely, that

the deep, unconscious impulses of the human soul are as potent in expression as conscious actions. All mechanical work must be subsidiary to this. The dictates of instinct--instinct refined by thorough knowledge and cultivation--must ever be the final law.⁷¹

The speculative school, to Curry's mind, had made several contributions to the teaching of delivery. First, Delsarte had distinguished between "fundamentals" and "accidentals." Only in the discussion of Delsarte did Curry indicate what he meant by these terms, though he used them freely throughout his writings. Apparently "fundamental" actions or activities in delivery were those which were always in operation and which controlled less important elements. To illustrate, in pantomime a mechanical teacher like Austin would "have the student place his feet at a certain angle, a certain distance apart and the body erect."⁷² This rule, according to Curry, dealt only with an "accidental" action of delivery. "The angle of the feet and the distance apart are mere accidental facts which vary according to temperament, and according to the intensity of emotion dominating

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 362.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 353.

the man."⁷³

Delsarte, on the other hand, would ignore "position," which was a variable, and concentrate upon "poise." By developing "poise," the student would automatically find the right position to communicate whatever emotion he felt. "Poise, thus, is fundamental to position. Poise is something unchangeable; position is something that changes with every passion."⁷⁴

Curry also showed how the same principle applied to gestures. The mechanists would have the students practice a great number of gestures, he said, each different gesture being "the sign" of a different emotion. Delsarte, however, would concentrate on a "series" or "the successive unfoldment of the parts of the arm, because this is fundamental to all gesture."⁷⁵

It was probably the influence of Delsarte which caused Curry to criticize Rush for treating only the "accidentals" of voice. Thus one finds in Rush's book detailed treatments of such abnormal and accidental vocal qualities as the guttural, the husky, and the tremulous. Had Rush been conscious of fundamentals, Curry insisted, he would have dwelt only on those operations of the voice which controlled and were present in all vocal efforts.⁷⁶

Second, Delsarte had introduced the concept of unity into teaching delivery. Though Curry rejected Delsarte's belief

⁷³Ibid., p. 354.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 353.

in trinities, he was deeply committed to the Frenchman's insistence that all the languages of man were united in the oneness of the man who used them:

While Delsarte's idea that everything is, in its elements, a trinity, is untrue, yet holding that "a trinity is the union of three co-essential, co-penetrant and co-extensive elements," he emphasized the fact that every product is complex.⁷⁷

Curry concluded that aside from the artificial aspects of Delsarte's trinities, the Frenchman's emphasis upon unity in delivery represented the discovery of "a great truth which is entirely overlooked in ordinary elocution."⁷⁸

II. Curry's Contemporaries

Curry was as familiar with the methods of his contemporaries as he was with those elocutionists of earlier generations. In his books and his magazine Curry claimed to have studied with over forty elocutionists in America and Europe. Though this may have been something of an exaggeration (occasionally he claimed fifty or sixty teachers), the list of specific names Curry mentioned in his writings is impressive. These names range from the relatively obscure Stacey Baxter, Curry's first teacher of elocution, to such famous elocutionary figures as Alexander Graham Bell and Steele MacKaye.

Despite this great number of teachers Curry believed that only a few of his contemporaries had had a marked effect upon

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 358.

⁷⁸Ibid.

his thought. The four men Curry praised with least reservation were Lewis Baxter Monroe, Alexander Melville Bell, Steele MacKaye, and Hiram Corson. This section indicates Curry's relationships with these figures.

Lewis Baxter Monroe

The exact date of Curry's first contact with Monroe is unknown. As early as 1873 when Curry was at Boston University studying theology, he attended a lecture at the School of Oratory, Monroe's own department also in Boston University.⁷⁹ After receiving the Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree in 1875, Curry enrolled in Monroe's School of Oratory, graduated in 1878,⁸⁰ and when Monroe died in 1879, Curry replaced him on the Boston University faculty.

Curry studied under Monroe for three years,⁸¹ and the latter's influence was pronounced. Unfortunately, Monroe published only one detailed explanation of his system of elocution, Manual of Physical and Vocal Training, so his precise contribution to Curry's theory remains obscure. To judge by Monroe's own

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 193.

⁸⁰"Foreword," Poems by Samuel Silas Curry, Ph.D., Litt.D., ed. with a foreword by Nathan Haskell Dole (Boston: Expression Company, 1922), p. 81.

⁸¹Curry himself said five years. Perhaps he took courses before finishing his work in theology. See [Curry] "Professor Lewis Baxter Monroe, A.M.: Some Characteristics of His Teaching," Expression, II (December, 1896), p. 243.

book his influence on Curry was mostly inspirational. Much of the book reflects James Rush's influence, and Monroe himself claimed to be "especially indebted to the great work of Dr. Rush on the Human Voice, and to the excellent adaptations of his methods by Professor William Russell."⁸² Furthermore, Curry admitted that Monroe "never completely rose above the Rush system."⁸³

Nevertheless, there are grounds for believing that Monroe eventually grew away from Rush. Monroe's book appeared in 1869, some years before Curry met him, and according to Curry during their acquaintance Monroe "gradually grew away from the shackles of that [Rush's] method." None of the major figures in the expressive movement cared for Rush's method, and almost all of them, including Curry, Charles Wesley Emerson, Leland Powers, and Franklin Sargent, had studied under Monroe.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Curry's own description of Monroe's principles bears little resemblance to Rush. According to Curry, Monroe had taught that the "three great words in vocal expression are imagination, sympathy, and suggestion."⁸⁵ Furthermore, Monroe had apparently

⁸²Lewis B. Monroe, Manual of Physical and Vocal Training; for the Use of Schools and for Private Instruction (Philadelphia: Cowperthwait and Co., 1869), pp. iii-iv.

⁸³[Curry], "Professor Lewis Baxter Monroe, A.M.: Some Characteristics . . . ," Expression, II (December, 1896), 244.

⁸⁴Fred C. Blanchard, "Professional Theatre Schools in the Early Twentieth Century," History of Speech Education in America, p. 624.

⁸⁵[Curry], "Professor Lewis Baxter Monroe, A.M.: Miscellaneous Class Notes," Expression, II (December, 1896), 248.

developed considerable antipathy to Rush's rules, for another principle which Curry recalled was Monroe's emphasis on "instinct." "Trust your instinct," Monroe had declared. "It is the only way to become an artist."⁸⁶

Despite these quotations it is possible that Curry was guilty of making Monroe over into his own image. One searches through Monroe's book in vain for any mention of "instinct," "sympathy," or "suggestion." And though Curry argued that Monroe "was the first to recognize truly the relation of imagination to expression," Monroe himself made no mention of "imagination" in his textbook. He did devote a chapter to "picturing," but by this term he meant only the ability to form vivid mental images:

He is the skillful reader who succeeds in bringing up in the minds of his hearers vivid images or the scenes delineated and the persons described. To do this he must have in his mind a clear conception of everything he would convey. The pictures and personages must become real to him for the time.⁸⁷

While Curry also used the term "imagination" to denote the faculty of "picturing," he extended the concept of "imagination" far beyond Monroe's strict purlieus. Even Curry must have felt that he was reading his own ideas into Monroe's theory for in the article devoted to Monroe Curry noted:

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Monroe, p. 83.

The notes were jotted down in a very abridged form, and no doubt often in my own words. They were never intended for publication, or even to represent accurately the work of Professor Monroe; thus they are no doubt colored by my own personality.⁸⁸

Alexander Melville Bell

Curry became acquainted with Alexander Melville Bell through the latter's son, Alexander Graham Bell. Curry first heard the younger Bell while attending Boston University:

Dr. Graham Bell was so improved in health that he accepted a position in the Faculty of Boston University School of Oratory at the opening of that institution in 1873. It was my great privilege, when I was a student in Boston University, to hear, in the autumn of 1873, his opening lecture. It was this lecture that first aroused me to the possibilities of the science of voice, and gave me an outlook and an inspiration which have lived with me during the thirty-three years that have passed since that hour.⁸⁹

Curry continued under the tutelage of Graham Bell until 1876 when he met Melville Bell in Washington, D. C. How long Curry continued his studies with Melville Bell is unknown, but the influence of the older man apparently was profound. Curry wrote: "Twenty-five years have passed since that July morning when I took my first lesson. But a quarter of a century has

⁸⁸[Curry], "Professor Lewis Baxter Monroe, A.M.: Miscellaneous Class Notes," Expression, II (December, 1896), 246.

⁸⁹Curry, Alexander Melville Bell: Some Memories with Fragments from a Pupil's Note-Book (Boston: School of Expression, 1906), pp. 16-17.

only deepened the impression made upon me by that great personality."⁹⁰ And elsewhere Curry testified that "of all my teachers, numbering fifty or sixty in different parts of the world, he [Bell] has perhaps had the greatest influence over me."⁹¹

Steele MacKaye

Curry's personal friend, Nathan Haskell Dole, whose thirty-page biography of the expressionist is the most complete account of Curry's life, made no mention of Steele MacKaye. The omission is curious for Curry himself frequently acknowledged a profound debt to MacKaye. As noted above Curry published almost nothing on pantomime out of deference to MacKaye's projected book on that subject. Though Curry claimed to disagree on some points with MacKaye,⁹² he did not incorporate these disagreements into his lecture notes on pantomime.⁹³

Curry probably took his first private lessons from MacKaye about 1883. Though he had heard MacKaye's lectures at Boston University as early as 1873, there is no record of any personal contact between the two men in the 70's. In 1880⁹⁴ and again in 1882 Curry studied abroad,⁹⁵ but Curry's papers contain a letter dated October 6, 1883, from MacKaye's secretary

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 18. ⁹¹Ibid., p. 10. ⁹²Province, p. vii.

⁹³The Delsarte Collection, Dept. of Archives, Louisiana State University Library.

⁹⁴Dole, p. 9. ⁹⁵Province, p. 302.

indicating that Curry had already taken some lessons from MacKaye and was planning to take more.⁹⁶ A second letter from the same source, undated but apparently written soon after the first, urged Curry to pursue his study with Mr. MacKaye further. Apparently Curry had offered to assist MacKaye with his teaching in New York, an offer which MacKaye through his secretary graciously declined.⁹⁷

Evidently Curry did continue his lessons, for a third letter, this time from MacKaye himself, not only praised Curry for his understanding of the Delsarte system but urged Curry to join him in teaching classes in New York.⁹⁸

As had been the case with Bell, an intimate friendship sprang up between Curry and his teacher which lasted far beyond the original teacher-student relationship of the two men.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Letter from Helen Ular, Private Secretary to Steele MacKaye, New York, Oct. 6, 1883, in The Delsarte Collection.

⁹⁷Letter from Helen Ular, New York, n.d., in The Delsarte Collection.

⁹⁸Letter from Steele MacKaye, New York, n.d., in The Delsarte Collection.

⁹⁹Apparently MacKaye's admiration of Curry lasted until MacKaye's death. In 1899 Curry acquired not only MacKaye's but Delsarte's personal papers. This acquisition Curry regarded as a sacred trust: "In my room are two boxes; one of these is nearly thirty years old, and came from Paris with the manuscripts of Delsarte after his death. What a long story! By the side of this box is another which contains the manuscripts of his foremost pupil and greatest representative, my teacher for many years, Mr. Steele MacKaye. These two lots of manuscripts are sacred trusts.

"I gaze with tender regard upon the manuscripts of the master

Though MacKaye's ideas did not significantly affect Curry's theory of vocal development, the expressionist founded his theory of physical development squarely on MacKaye's teachings.

Hiram Corson

The relationship between Curry and Corson was more tenuous than was the case with either Monroe, Bell, or MacKaye. Unlike those elocutionists Corson never taught Curry, nor did the two men ever indicate that they were personally acquainted.

Nevertheless, Corson may have influenced Curry quite as profoundly as had the other men, for Corson's Elocutionary Manual¹⁰⁰

I never saw; and with a feeling few will appreciate I touch the notes which were left by one whose pupil I was so many years. Here are the notes of my first courses, copied by myself and returned to him fifteen years ago. Here, too, is his penciled sheet of one of the last lessons I ever took, in all its incompleteness.

"As soon as my time and strength will admit, and the careful copying, translation and arrangement can be made with satisfactory results, I shall present such parts of these, and in such a way, as will best serve the cause of education in furthering the knowledge of the right methods of training a human being to the highest degree of perfection." ([Curry], "The Delsarte and MacKaye sic Manuscripts," Expression, V [Spring, 1899], 262.)

¹⁰⁰ Corson's ideas on elocution appeared in several texts and essays, the most important being: An Elocutionary Manual: Consisting of Choice Selections from English and American Literature, Adapted to Every Variety of Vocal Expression; Designed for the Higher Classes in Schools and Seminaries, and for Private and Social Reading, with an intro. "On the Study of Literature, and on Vocal Culture as Indispensable to an Aesthetic Appreciation of Poetry" (Philadelphia: Charles DeSilver, 1867); The Aims of Literary Study (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1901); "Vocal Culture in Its Relation to Literary Culture," The Atlantic Monthly, LXXV (June, 1895), 810-16; The Voice and Spiritual Education (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1896). Of these works, however, only the Elocutionary Manual was published early enough to influence Curry's Province.

contains the seeds of ideas fundamental to Curry's whole system. Though Curry seldom mentioned Corson in his own textbooks, he devoted a long article in the first issue of Expression magazine to a review of all of Corson's publications on elocution up to 1895.¹⁰¹

Apparently, Curry had few reservations about Corson's theory. "The School of Expression," wrote Curry, "agrees with Professor Corson in everything except his advocacy of the Rush System."¹⁰² Even the influence of Rush did not dampen Curry's enthusiasm, for Curry believed that Corson's latest writings indicated a growing awareness of Rush's shortcomings:

In fact, in his article in the "Atlantic" especially, he speaks of "untimely technical instruction" of a "course in soulless elocutionary spouting," and says that "after all, it is not upon inflections and emphases and other vocal functions that the true reader chiefly depends."¹⁰³

So sure was Curry that he and Corson were in agreement on fundamentals that he concluded:

If he [Corson] knew the advanced methods in Vocal Training and Vocal Expression taught in the School of Expression, he would be far more enthusiastic over the power of right Vocal Expression to develop appreciation of the highest literature.¹⁰⁴

To turn from Curry's texts to Corson's Elocutionary

¹⁰¹[Curry], "Professor Corson on Literary Study and Vocal Expression," Expression, I (June, 1895), 25.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Manual is to see at once how thoroughly Corson had anticipated the work and thought of the expressionist. In the first place, Corson was the only elocutionist Curry mentioned who did not use literature merely as a means of teaching vocal expression. Like Curry, Corson was interested in vocal expression chiefly as a means of appreciating literature.¹⁰⁵ Twenty-seven years before the publication of Province Corson wrote:

An indispensable condition of an aesthetic appreciation of high poetry, is, that it receive an adequate vocal expression. Without a high vocal culture,--without the highest vocal culture,--the study of poetry must be more or less imperfect.¹⁰⁶

In the second place, like Curry, Corson believed that any elocutionary technique should have as its goal the fulfillment of nature's purposes. "Science and art do not attempt anything different from these purposes, but only aim to fulfill them more effectually."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵According to Donald E. Hargis' essay "A French Elocutionist: 1877," The Southern Speech Journal, XXX (Fall, 1964), 24-35; Ernest Legouvé had also expressed the idea that oral interpretation was a means of appreciating literature in L'Art de la lecture (1877). Although Curry made no reference to either Legouvé or his book, he may well have been familiar with Legouvé's work. Legouvé was still living when Curry studied in Paris in 1880 and 1882. Furthermore, sections of L'Art de la lecture were translated and published in Werner's The Voice. See Ernest Legouvé, "The Art of Oratory," trans. Abby L. Alger, The Voice, VI (February, 1884), 17-20; VI (April, 1884), 52-53; and VI (May, 1884), 65-66.

¹⁰⁶Corson, Elocutionary Manual, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 37.

In the third place, Corson believed that the control of delivery could not be trusted entirely to the will and the conscious faculties of man. "Principles and rules," he argued along with Curry, "must become subjective. Growth of every kind proceeds from the passive to the active and the spontaneous."¹⁰⁸

In the fourth place, though he believed in the unconscious spontaneous nature of delivery, Corson was not a thorough-going disciple of Whately. Full understanding of a poem did not necessarily guarantee good oral reading, he argued, though understanding was undeniably the first step. Were Whately correct, he pointed out, then poets themselves would be the finest oral readers. "It would be absurd to suppose that these poets did not appreciate their own melodies when they produced them."¹⁰⁹ To the contrary, "they no doubt had a profounder sense of them as conductors of feeling, than the most perfect reader would be able to express."¹¹⁰ Yet, Whately's theory notwithstanding, poets were usually poor readers. "Coleridge is an example. 'Amongst Coleridge's accomplishments,' says De Quincey, alluding, in his 'Literary Reminiscences,' to Coleridge's lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts, at the Royal Institution, 'good reading was not one.'"¹¹¹ And, according to Corson, both Byron and Poe were "most monotonous, uninteresting" readers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 38. Italics mine. ¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 33. ¹¹²Ibid., p. 34.

Finally, Corson agreed with Curry that the fundamental faculty for good oral reading was the imagination. It was only by this faculty, Corson insisted, that a reader could first receive the poem "in as passive a state as possible," allowing his feelings to "be the pioneers of the judgement," and then, by the same faculty "amplify and complete the poetic feeling of the hearer" in "a higher and more comprehensive synthesis of thought and feeling."¹¹³

Corson's conclusion on the faculty of the imagination sounds remarkably like that of Curry in Imagination and Dramatic Instinct:

No other means in the absence of an adequate imagination, (and such an imagination must be extremely rare,) can be employed to reveal all the sly, lurking, and subtle elements of suggestiveness which must be felt before they can be successfully analyzed and grasped in their entirety.¹¹⁴

III. Curry's Method for Developing Technique in Oral Expression

The four most important textbooks which present Curry's method for developing technique in oral reading are Lessons, Imagination, Mind and Voice, and Foundations. Written hurriedly between the obligations of teaching, administration, and public lecturing, they are riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions, a fact enthusiastically underscored by nearly every study of Curry's philosophy.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 45-46.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 46.

Despite these weaknesses, Curry remained consistent on the fundamental points of his method. This section summarizes Curry's method for developing vocal skill or technique, while emphasizing Curry's debt to the elocutionists of his own and earlier days.

From the outset Curry was caught between the demands of Whately and Corson, on the one hand, that delivery should be primarily a subconscious and involuntary activity, and the insistence of the mechanists and Melville Bell, on the other hand, that delivery be taught as a science with the function of each element clearly understood by the student.

To satisfy the demands of both camps, Curry organized two distinct but closely related sets of exercises. These he termed "psychic" and "technical." The function of one series was to train the mind both in its voluntary conscious actions and in its involuntary subconscious actions. The function of the second series was to train the voice and body so that they would respond freely and normally to the actions of the mind.

Of the two sets of exercises "psychic" exercises, or those which trained the mental functions, were easily the most important. Training should begin, Curry believed, with psychic exercises, then proceed to technical exercises, and finally, return again to the psychic:¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵Mind, p. 71.

A psychic exercise can be carried forward to a direct application in the work of expression. A technical one is more preliminary. It is the attuning of the instrument before it is played upon, and is forgotten in the act of expression.¹¹⁶

Thus, since "a psychic exercise is spontaneous" rather than deliberative, students trained by Curry's method would conform to Whately's dictum that the reader's mind be "exclusively intent on what he has to say."¹¹⁷ At the same time, having passed through a period of technical exercises, these students would "be made acquainted with the instrument of speech, as an instrument, that all its parts may be under his control."¹¹⁸

Psychic Exercises

Curry divided psychic exercises into two classes: those which develop the conscious mental faculties and those which develop unconscious faculties. He presented the first class of exercises in Lessons. Because he admired the work of psychologists in their study of conscious mental faculties, he based these exercises largely on psychological theories. An earlier chapter has outlined Curry's debt to nineteenth-century psychology and has explained Curry's psychic exercises for

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹¹⁷ Whately, p. 362.

¹¹⁸ Alexander Melville Bell, "Elocutionary Manual": The Principles of Elocution, with Exercises and Notations (2d ed. rev. and enl.; Washington, D. C.: Volta Bureau, 1887), p. 7.

conscious mental actions.

Curry presented the second class of psychic exercises, those which train the unconscious imaginative actions of the mind, in Imagination and Dramatic Instinct. Curry believed that the only way to train the imagination was to exercise it in all its functions. Furthermore, such exercises would assist the student in understanding the nature of this most elusive mental faculty. Curry's own understanding of the imagination derived from his study of aesthetics. The chapter on aesthetics in this study has explained both Curry's concept of imagination and his method for developing it.¹¹⁹

Technical Exercises for the Voice

Curry presented a sketch of his technical exercises in Lessons in 1895. The full development of these exercises appeared some fifteen years later in Mind and Voice. The technical exercises contained in both books treat only the voice and are clearly in the scientific tradition of Rush and Bell. In Mind and Voice, after affirming that there was a science of the voice, Curry declared that though "vocal training is necessarily an artistic process," yet "all art . . . is based upon science."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹See pp. 164-76 of this study.

¹²⁰Mind., p. 16.

Curry had admired Delsarte's method because it emphasized fundamentals rather than accidentals. He hoped to use the same approach in vocal exercises that American Delsartians like MacKaye had used in pantomimic exercises. Just as Delsarte and MacKaye had underscored "poise" and the "series" of movements which were fundamental to gesture, Curry sought to underscore the fundamental elements in vocal action.

Curry believed that one fundamental action which underlay all vocal actions was the physical reaction of the vocal mechanism in response to a mental or psychic impression. This fundamental he described as "preparation for tone":

Preparation for tone implies a direct response of the body to the mind immediately before the tone is produced. This response consists in taking breath resulting in a sympathetic elastic fullness or activity in the middle of the body, and a simultaneous passivity and opening of the throat or tone passage. Wherever these conditions are reversed, or in any way interfered with, there will be imperfect tone production, and whatever tends to establish them will make the voice easy, natural, and strong.¹²¹

Curry's emphasis on the importance of breathing to vocal expression was certainly not original. Though Rush did not emphasize breathing in The Philosophy of the Human Voice, his disciple, James Murdoch, in Analytic Elocution began his method with drills in breathing:

As all vocality, from the instinctive cry of the infant to the most extended effort of the developed

¹²¹Ibid., p. 18.

voice, is so inseparably connected with respiration, it is to the operations of breathing alone, in its gentler and more aspirated forms, that our attention and practice toward acquiring an educated control of the muscles governing voice-production will be first directed.¹²²

Furthermore, Curry's mentor, Melville Bell, also began his discussion of elocution with exercises in breathing. "Breath," he wrote, "is thus the material of Speech."¹²³ And Merritt, after examining the articles by elocutionists in Werner's Magazine, has concluded: "It is highly probable that in the opinion of the majority some type of training in breathing was necessary for the highest achievement in vocal art."¹²⁴

But Curry's observation was original, nonetheless. No one before Curry had related the taking of breath so directly to the mental activity of the speaker, and none had argued for "a simultaneous passivity and opening of the throat" which would establish ideal conditions for tone production. Dole believed Curry got his ideas on the importance of breathing from Charles Guilmette in Boston and Francesco Lamperti in Milan.¹²⁵ But Curry's interest in breathing may also have come from his work under Emile Behnke and Lennox Brown in

¹²²James E. Murdoch, Analytic Elocution: Containing Studies, Theoretical and Practical, of Expressive Speech (Cincinnati: Van Antwerp, Bragg and Co., 1884), p. 16.

¹²³Bell, p. 18.

¹²⁴Merritt, p. 115.

¹²⁵Dole, p. 10.

London. In Expression Curry wrote:

When I studied with Emile Behnke of London, in 1880, he told me my breathing was wrong. Being a graduate of the Boston University School of Oratory and of Dr. Guilmette and having studied with forty different teachers, I was inclined to be skeptical. Noticing my look of incredulity, he added, "There is something peculiar about your voice. Let us go and see Lennox Brown." So we walked out together and called upon this noted specialist. My teacher went in before me and had a private consultation with the physician, and then I was called in for my interview. Lennox Brown examined my throat and gave me a prescription and some advice which has been of untold advantage to me ever since. Besides confirming the teacher's assertion that my breathing was wrong, Lennox Brown called my attention to a physical condition of which I was unaware.¹²⁶

This first fundamental action in vocal expression actually consisted of two separate operations: first, the taking of the breath in response to a mental impression, and second, the simultaneous relaxation of the tone passages. Consequently, to secure both operations, Curry prescribed two sets of exercises.

There is little that is original or startling in Curry's exercises for breathing. Like the majority of elocutionists he argued for abdominal rather than clavicular breathing, pointing out characteristically that abdominal breathing was clearly "nature's intention."¹²⁷ He also distinguished between "tone breathing" and "life breathing"

¹²⁶[Curry], "Teachers and Physicians," Expression, V (December, 1898), 200.

¹²⁷Mind, pp. 88-94.

arguing that the production of tone required greater breath than the requisites of health.¹²⁸ This distinction was an echo of Bell's idea that "the amount of air ordinarily inspired for vital wants is quite insufficient for vocal purposes."¹²⁹

Because the technical exercise serves mainly to correct bad habits and abnormal conditions, Curry proceeded to present specific exercises for specific problems. The faults in breathing which Curry isolated were non-rhythmical breathing, weak breathing, mouth breathing, audible breathing, breathing too seldom, and labored breathing.¹³⁰

Curry developed the next set of exercises to secure the simultaneous relaxation of all the parts of the tone passage. Curry's favorite word for indicating this relaxation was "surrender." "The tone passage is not opened by direct voluntary action," he wrote. "It must be relaxed. It opens because of the surrender of the back of the tongue and the jaw."¹³¹ To counteract bad habits, Curry presented discussions of each part of the tone passage. These parts, according to Curry, were the lips, the jaw, the tongue, the soft palate, and the pharynx.¹³² In actuality, Curry presented specific exercises for the "surrender" of only the lips, the jaws, and

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 101-05.

¹²⁹Bell, p. 19.

¹³⁰Mind, pp. 105-09.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 131.

¹³²Ibid., pp. 120-29.

the tongue, though he devoted several pages to discussions of the functions of the soft palate and the pharynx in voice production. The relaxation of the lips, the jaws, and the tongue, he believed, would usually result in the relaxation of all the remaining parts of the tone passage. When discussing the muscles of the soft palate, he wrote: "Development of passivity is best secured through the general co-ordination and especially in the education of the tongue."¹³³ Curry treated relaxation of the pharyngeal walls similarly:

It is difficult to reach the pharynx directly, but indirectly we can easily secure a proper passive condition of its parts. The lips, the jaw, and especially the tongue, have a mysterious connection with the pharynx and any constrictions of these cause corresponding constriction at the pharynx, the real gateway of the voice.¹³⁴

Though inhalation and relaxation were the most important conditions to tone production, there was yet another fundamental action, Curry argued. At the same time that tone passage and breath were reacting to a mental impression, the whole body was also activated by this same mental impression. Nor was this response of the whole body unrelated to tone production. "Careful observation will show that actions of the body, when spontaneous or truly expressive, normally establish conditions of tone."¹³⁵ Curry went to considerable trouble to establish the relationship of the body to the production of vocal tone,

¹³³Ibid., p. 124.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 127.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 26.

undoubtedly because he felt "most people regard them [actions of body] as of no importance."¹³⁶ To prove this point, Curry would have the student make the best possible tone and then "as far as possible draw down the outer corners of the nostrils." The student, according to Curry, would "discover a surprising effect upon his tone."¹³⁷

Curry probably derived his concept of tone production from his study with MacKaye, though he objected to MacKaye's principle "that when the action of the body was correct the voice would necessarily be properly produced."¹³⁸ (For one thing, MacKaye had ignored Curry's first fundamental action in voice production--sympathetic inhalation and relaxation.) Yet, Curry wrote, MacKaye and other Delsartians were correct when they insisted "that the voice can not be thoroughly trained to the highest realization of its possibilities without attention to pantomime."¹³⁹

Though Curry had presented a detailed series of exercises to secure the fundamental action of spontaneous breathing and relaxation of tone passages, he published no corresponding exercises for the second fundamental, bodily responsiveness to mental impressions. This omission was probably deliberate, for such a series of exercises would belong to the province of pantomime, and Curry's principal

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 27.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 30.

¹³⁹Province, p. 357.

concern in his textbooks was voice and bodily action.

Curry devoted almost a half of Mind and Voice to the inhalation and simultaneous relaxation of the tone passages. In the remainder of the book his treatment of the voice was closer to that of most other nineteenth-century elocutionists.

Beginning with the vibration of the vocal bands, Curry introduced exercises for the proper initiation of tone. Disagreeing with Rush's "shock of the glottis" theory, Curry held that when sound was initiated properly "there is no click in the glottis."¹⁴⁰ To avoid this "click," Curry introduced exercises derived from Lamperti. These exercises were intended to secure "a sympathetic co-ordination of the right activity in the middle of the body with the bringing of the vocal bands into position."¹⁴¹ Curry concluded his discussion with an analysis of specific faults in vibration such as passivity (inadequate breathing), hoarseness, huskiness, and breathiness, with remedial exercises for each fault.¹⁴²

After discussing the initiation of sound, Curry dealt with pitch. Curry argued that training in pitch was impossible unless the student could hear subtle changes in pitch. He therefore advocated training the ear before introducing specific exercises for pitch development. To accomplish such training,

¹⁴⁰Mind, p. 184. ¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁴²Ibid., pp. 167-216.

Curry used the same method he had learned from Graham Bell at the Boston University School of Oratory. According to Curry, Bell's most effective exercise was the following:

On a piece of paper or blackboard make a long sloping mark upward, and then in contrast one sloping downward. Make the rising slope gradually, following it slowly with the voice, and then do the same with the downward mark. The contrast should be so salient that the dullest ear can realize the difference. Then gradually give both more rapidly while preserving the same form.

Make also the downward slide first, and the upward one second, and practice in reverse order. Pass from one to the other in various ways, keeping the inflexions long and gradual enough to be recognized, quickening them as the power to give attention through the ear is developed.¹⁴³

Curry's discussion of pitch also included a section on song. He believed that song and speech should be studied together. For the person interested in speech the study of song made possible a more careful observation of tone quality. For the person interested in song the study of speech insured against becoming "cold, mechanical, or careless in articulation."¹⁴⁴

The section following the treatment of pitch Curry entitled "Height of the Sound Waves." Under this heading he dealt with projection of the voice. Curry argued that six separate factors controlled projection. These were: (1) the sympathetic retention of breath caused by a vivid mental impression,

¹⁴³Ibid., pp. 226-27.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 241. These ideas may have come from Lamperti who was primarily a teacher of singers. Curry hints that their origin may have been William Shakespeare, another singing teacher under whom Curry took some lessons in London.

(2) relaxation of the tone passage, (3) vocal quantity ("every vowel must have the same relative quantity it has in conversation, though extended and enlarged"), (4) distinctness of articulation, (5) variety of pitch, and (6) increased volume.¹⁴⁵ Curry deliberately placed volume last on this list because he wished to emphasize what a relatively unimportant element in projection he believed it to be. Much of Curry's treatment of projection¹⁴⁶ discouraged overemphasis of volume in the achievement of forceful delivery.¹⁴⁷

The next section in Curry's book deals again with the quality of tone, this time emphasizing "secondary vibrations" or resonance. This section is one of the most repetitious passages in Mind and Voice. While Curry devoted some space to the practice of individual sounds, introducing exercises he had borrowed from Charles Guilmette,¹⁴⁸ Curry's central issue was that "development of the overtones and sympathetic vibrations of the voice" depended "upon development of imagination and right feeling."¹⁴⁹ Consequently, most of Curry's specific exercises

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 180-81.

¹⁴⁶See Ibid., pp. 277-332.

¹⁴⁷Curry was less than original here. Even James Murdoch, whom Curry criticized at length for supporting Rush (Province, pp. 314-17), had written: "Force is always to be distinguished from mere loudness. In all exertion of the animal organism, it is concentration of effort which implies power in the result; without this, mere loudness will become bawling, in its extremes." (Murdoch, pp. 304-05)

¹⁴⁸Mind, p. 349.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 358.

were similar to those he had presented in Imagination.

Curry concluded his technical exercises for voice with a discussion of articulation and pronunciation. Having developed right tone production, the student should ~~now~~ begin to practice articulation and pronunciation, he declared, introducing the student to the simpler aspects of Melville Bell's visible speech. Curry made no claims to originality in his treatment of articulation and pronunciation and even hinted that students who wished a more thorough treatment of this subject would be well advised to study carefully Bell's system:

One who wishes to master the sounds of any language, including his own, should study some of the works by Professor Bell explaining visible speech. He will there ascertain the nature of the different sounds, and be able to master more easily the most difficult of spoken languages.¹⁵⁰

Curry ended his discussion with a brief analysis of some of the common faults in articulation and pronunciation, again deferring to the authority of Melville Bell's book Mechanism of Speech.¹⁵¹

Unquestionably the most unique aspect of Curry's technical exercises lay in their emphasis upon the fundamental actions involved in vocal production. Curry described two such fundamental actions: (1) the simultaneous inspiration of breath and relaxation of the tone passage upon receiving a mental impression, and (2) the simultaneous muscular reaction of the body which then acted as a sounding board for the voice. Because

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 402.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 428.

he had restricted himself to purely vocal considerations, however, Curry published only his ideas on breathing and relaxation of the tone passages.

There are grounds for believing that Curry was equally concerned with the second fundamental action, the reaction of the whole body to the mind.

Technical Exercises for the Body

Though Curry published nothing on pantomime, there is evidence testifying that he was deeply concerned with this subject. Shortly before his death in 1921 he had begun work on a book to be entitled "Pantomimic Training, Simple and Complex--Stage Business."¹⁵²

Though Curry never completed this book, a 158-page draft of the manuscript is among Curry's personal papers. These papers also include numerous essays, lecture notes, and syllabi which Curry used at The School of Expression. Finally, Eliza Josephine Harwood, who taught at The School of Expression from 1906 to 1925, published in 1933 a book which she claimed to be "an attempt to give the principles upon which Dr. S. S. Curry constructed the system of Body training in the School of Expression."¹⁵³ When all this evidence is pieced together, a

¹⁵²Dole, p. 11.

¹⁵³Eliza Josephine Harwood, How We Train the Body: The Mechanics of Pantomime Technique (Boston: Walter H. Baker Co., 1933), p. 9.

fairly comprehensive picture of Curry's method for training the body emerges.

According to Harwood, Curry distinguished between two kinds of bodily training, "organic" and "harmonic." Organic training or gymnastics had as its primary purpose "health, increase in vitality, and the formation of habits which shall build character."¹⁵⁴ Apparently, this phase of training received little stress at The School of Expression. Harwood devoted only eighteen pages to it, and Curry made no mention of it in his unpublished manuscript.

Far more important was "harmonic training." Almost all of Curry's manuscript is devoted to this subject. Perhaps the salient feature of Curry's discussion of "harmonic training" is the influence of the Delsartians, particularly MacKaye. Though Curry made no reference to MacKaye in his manuscript, Harwood declared: "Harmonic training was originated, developed and taught by Steele MacKaye,"¹⁵⁵ and Shaver has concluded: "The weight of evidence . . . would seem to support MacKaye in his claims for inventing harmonic gymnastics."¹⁵⁶

If Curry's ideas were not derived directly from his

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 11. The term "organic gymnastics" may have come from the Delsartians. See Frances A. Shaw, The Art of Oratory, System of Delsarte, from the French of M. L'Abbe Delaumosne (Albany, N. Y.: Edgar S. Werner, 1882), p. xiv.

¹⁵⁵Harwood, p. 9. ¹⁵⁶Shaver, p. 211.

work under MacKaye, they were squarely in the Delsarte tradition. Beginning his discussion of pantomime with a definition of expression as "the revelation of human nature in human action,"¹⁵⁷ Curry asserted that since human nature was "immaterial and subjective," it could only be understood by the character of its activity. Human nature, he said, engaged in "three distinct species of activity," these being: (1) "Sensations--which excite feelings," (2) "Reflections--which excite thoughts," and (3) "Affections--which excite selections, determine motives, and beget volitions":

Thus we perceive: 1st that man feels, and desires by virtue of a sensative [sic] or passionnal principle of being. 2nd that he thinks by virtue of a reflective, or rational principle of Being. 3rd that he loves by virtue of a selective, or affectional principle of Being.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, each of these activities had a function, these being the vital function, the mental function, and the moral or motive function.¹⁵⁹ Hence, Curry concluded, "All expression . . . is the revelation of the various vital, mental, and motive conditions . . . of the being through the actions of the different parts of the body."¹⁶⁰

After establishing a three part organization of the

¹⁵⁷[Curry], "Harmonic Gymnastics, Simple and Complex Expression--Stage Business" (Unpublished Manuscript in The Delsarte Collection, Dept. of Archives, Louisiana State University Library), p. 1.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 2. ¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 3. ¹⁶⁰Ibid.

body into physiological, anatomical, and physiognomical, which he believed was related to the three functions, the vital, the motive and the mental respectively, Curry turned to his main concern, pantomime.¹⁶¹ Curry argued that there were two kinds of pantomime, elliptic and descriptive. The latter referred primarily to physical objects and hence was representative, but elliptic pantomime expressed those aspects of human nature which eluded the power of words.¹⁶² Thus, elliptic pantomime was manifestive.¹⁶³ Curry did not discuss descriptive pantomime, but elliptic pantomime he divided into "three forms of action":

- 1st Motions, or gestures, which manifest the emotions or intentiveness of the Being.
- 2nd Positions, or attitudes, which manifest conditions of the Being.
- 3rd Bearings, or habitual positions, which manifest habitual or chronic conditions, or characteristics

¹⁶¹Ibid., pp. 5-10.

¹⁶²Curry's distinction between "elliptic" and "descriptive" pantomime seems roughly comparable to the distinction which many contemporary public speaking textbooks make between "conventional" or "emphatic" gestures and "descriptive" gestures. According to one such textbook, conventional gestures are those "which have been used so universally that almost everyone recognizes what they mean. These gestures have become a sort of generalized sign language." (Alan H. Monroe, Principles and Types of Speech /5th ed.; Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1962/, p. 55.) "They are general in meaning and are primarily useful in emphasizing the expressions they accompany." (Ibid., p. 56.) Descriptive gestures, on the other hand, "are imitative. The speaker describes the size, shape, or movement of an object by imitation." (Ibid., p. 58.)

¹⁶³See the discussion of "representation" and "manifestation" in the chapter on aesthetics.

of the individual Being.¹⁶⁴

Before any of these actions could become expressive, Curry insisted, they had to possess three distinct but co-essential elements. These elements were ease, precision, and harmony.¹⁶⁵ To insure that the student would possess such elements, Curry prescribed a series of exercises which he called "harmonic gymnastics." These exercises, he warned, were simply designed to combat the obnoxious effects of habit and custom. Like technical exercises for the voice they did not seek to make all subservient to the will. Rather, harmonic gymnastic exercises were designed to call the student's attention to abnormalities only as long as they persisted. Their goal was not to make pantomime volitional, but rather, "to develop an instinctive, unconscious, effortless, and spontaneous obedience on the part of the individual, to those universal laws which develop ease, precision, and harmony of motion, and thus subliminate, and potentize expression in man."¹⁶⁶

To accommodate this objective, Curry divided his exercises for elliptic pantomime into two "classes of motions." These were "Decomposing Motions--Or those whose aim is to decompose the old and vicious [sic] habits of action" and "Recomposing Motions--Or those tending to develop in the individual a spontaneous

¹⁶⁴[Curry], "Harmonic Gymnastics . . . ," pp. 10-11.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 12. ¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 13.

obedience to those natural laws which perfect the mechanical activity of the pantomimic organization."¹⁶⁷ Curry did not present decomposing and recomposing exercises separately but together as this was "the order best calculated to prepare the organization to fitly perform its function of expression."¹⁶⁸

Paralleling his treatment of vocal technique, Curry argued that pantomimic exercises should begin with some fundamental action present in all bodily actions. This fundamental action, he believed, was poise. Poise was the "common centre from, to, and about which both classes of motion can freely play."¹⁶⁹

Accordingly, Curry devoted the first series of exercises to poise, arguing that poise resulted from securing a "oneness" of the body:

Whenever the action of the body . . . is such as to break, or interrupt its oneness, either at the neck, the waist, or the knees, and thus emphasize the distinction between one part of the body and the other, the poise becomes vicious, vulgar and ignobly weak.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13. According to Shaver, the terms "decomposing" and "recomposing" probably originated with Steele MacKaye. (Shaver, p. 209, p. 211.)

¹⁶⁸[Curry], "Harmonic Gymnastics . . .," p. 14.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 14. Curry borrowed these ideas on poise directly from the Delsartians. In Province he credited Delsarte with being the first man to recognize that poise was fundamental to all expressive bodily movement. (p. 354.)

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 15.

Though Curry did not define "oneness," his discussion is similar to that of Harwood who declared: "In oneness we consider the body en masse. When all the agents are parallel and the body is balanced with the weight equally distributed over both feet, we have oneness."¹⁷¹

Curry presented two exercises for the development of "oneness," but he presented six exercises for "unity."¹⁷² The distinction Curry had in mind between "oneness" and "unity" is not clear because at no time in his manuscript did he specifically discuss "unity." But Harwood also distinguished between "oneness" and "unity," and unlike Curry, she defined this distinction:

Unity is the body centralized with all the parts or agents related to a common center as well as to each other but moving freely to, from and about the dominant center in the body. Unity is developed from Oneness and implies diversity.

While Oneness implies only one thing, Unity means two or more things in their relation.

In Oneness all the parts are parallel, in Unity the parts are opposed to each other.¹⁷³

The remainder of Curry's manuscript is also largely a repetition of Delsartian teachings, particularly those of MacKaye. Having established the fundamental poise of the student, Curry concentrated on specific parts of the body. He

¹⁷¹Harwood, p. 29.

¹⁷²[Curry], "Harmonic Gymnastics . . . ," p. 15.

¹⁷³Harwood, p. 31.

began with the fingers, and proceeded to present decomposing and recomposing exercises for the wrists, the ankles, the walk, attitudes of the head, the feet, the neck, the shoulders, the hips, and gestures of the hands.¹⁷⁴

In the final section Curry dealt with the more complex aspects of pantomime involving several elements of bodily movement. The first of these complex actions Curry called "transitions of attention." The human being, he argued, displayed three distinct degrees of attention or interest in any object outside himself. All these degrees of attention were reflected by pantomimic action. Minor attention, according to Curry, involved only the eyeball; greater interest involved both the eyeball and the face; and extreme interest involved the eye, the face, and the torso.¹⁷⁵

Curry then presented specific exercises designed to coordinate all the separate elements involved in the three degrees of attention.

Next, he treated what he called "Radiation in Gesticulation." Here Curry's principal concern was "the order in which the different joints shall succeed each other in the

¹⁷⁴ [Curry], "Harmonic Gymnastics . . . ," pp. 29-99. Among other Delsartians, Genieve Stebbins also prescribed "Harmonic Gymnastics" for the decomposing and recomposing of all these parts of the body. See Stebbins, Delsarte System of Expression (2d ed.; New York: Edgar S. Werner, 1887).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

unfolding or folding actions of the arm in gesticulation."¹⁷⁶

The remainder of the manuscript presents only a rough sketch of Curry's ideas. These pages contain no discussions at all consisting entirely of different exercises, all apparently designed to secure coordination of the different parts of the body.¹⁷⁷

Though Harwood's book is decidedly the clearer explanation of Curry's views on pantomime, his own manuscript is important for it indicates that Harwood's understanding of his methods was an accurate one.

Another interesting document in Curry's papers is a syllabus for an introductory course on pantomime. Apparently, the course consisted of two units treating organic and harmonic training respectively. The unit on harmonic training follows closely the order of training which Curry advocated in Mind and Voice. Curry divided harmonic training into four sub-units. He devoted these sub-units to oneness, unity, freedom or liberation (possibly resembling "surrender"), and elemental actions, in that order. While these specific subjects did not occur in his discussions of voice, Curry did follow the same procedure he had advocated in Mind and Voice. That is, after

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 113. Again, Curry probably derived his ideas from Delsartism. In Province he claimed that Delsarte had stressed exercises to develop "the successive unfoldment of the parts of the arm." (Province, p. 354.)

¹⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 122-158.

a preliminary discussion of the subject matter he would begin with psychic exercises, then proceed to technical exercises, and end with specific applications of the theory. To illustrate, Curry's outline for the teaching of unity is as follows:

II. Unity

Studies

- Difference between oneness and unity
- Which is first?
- Necessity of a centre
- Illustrate by crystal
- Illustrate by organism
 - Diamond and charcoal
- Higher organism of animals
- Process of evolution and development explained

Psychic Exercises

- Sympathetic attraction with coordination of unity and oneness
- Dignity and lack of dignity in bearing
- Prince and the clown
- Elevation and exaltation
- Surprise and unity and oneness

Technical exercises

- Harmonic poise for unity
- Harmonic poise for forward
- Harmonic poise for backward
- Harmonic poise for forward and backward
- Elevation of body on the balls of feet with unity and oneness

Attraction and Repulsion

- Unity and oneness coordinated

Application

- Lyric exaltation
- Sympathetic Attraction¹⁷⁸

IV. Summary

This chapter has attempted to indicate Curry's debt to the elocutionary movement. Though Curry regarded his own

¹⁷⁸[Curry], "Introductory Pantomimic Training" (unpublished notes, The Delsarte Collection), p. 7.

method for developing skill in delivery as being unique, he had actually borrowed heavily from his predecessors and from his contemporaries. In formulating his own teaching methods, Curry sought a way to incorporate the best of the past while, at the same time, culling out whatever he felt was useless and invalid.

Perhaps Curry most admired what he called the "impulsive school," for he adopted the central thesis of that movement, namely, that good delivery was basically a spontaneous activity prompted more by the reader's full awareness of the meaning of his selection than by deliberate manipulation of the elements of delivery. Certainly, two basic tenets of Curry's approach are consonant with the impulsive position. These tenets are: (1) that psychic exercises which develop conscious and unconscious mental activities were the most important form of training for delivery, and (2) that technical exercises which concentrated the student's attention on the physical processes of delivery had no direct application to the art of public speaking, reading, or acting.

Where the impulsive school had erred, Curry believed, was its assumption that most students possess normal voices and responsive bodies. Curry's experience as a teacher provided him with no evidence in support of this assumption. Consequently, he found attractive the belief of the mechanical school that the study of delivery could be a science. Though he attributed this belief to Rush, he felt that Rush had too

often treated peculiarities and idiosyncracies of delivery. In Melville Bell's theory, however, Curry found a scientific treatment of the more important processes of delivery.

For the majority of students who needed training to make their voices and bodies responsive to strong mental impressions, Curry presented a series of exercises he called "technical." Curry frequently likened these exercises to the tuning of a musical instrument. The voice and body, he believed, must be tuned before they could properly perform their functions in delivery. Furthermore, just as the process of tuning an instrument was forgotten during a performance, so technical exercises, having served their purpose, would be forgotten in the act of delivery.

Curry presented technical exercises for the development of both voice and body. His exercises for the voice strongly suggest the influence of yet another elocutionary group, the Delsartians or, as Curry called them, the "speculative school." Curry believed that Delsarte had discovered the fundamentals of bodily action and he attempted to undertake a like inquiry into the voice. Consequently, many of his vocal exercises sought to develop inhalation and relaxation of the tone passage, actions which he thought were fundamental to all normal tone production.

Curry also presented exercises for the body, and again the influence of Delsartism is apparent. Curry called these exercises "harmonic gymnastics," a term which probably originated with Delsarte's pupil, Steele MacKaye. These exercises treated

the head, the torso, and the limbs. In all cases Curry sought to make these parts directly responsive to the mental activity of the reader.

Of all the separate philosophies within the elocutionary movement the imitative school seems to have influenced Curry least. Since he abhorred the practice of teaching by imitation, there was no way Curry could or would directly incorporate imitative practices into his own theory. He did, however, believe that the observation of good artists at work could inspire students to develop in their own personal styles, and for this reason he tried to obtain the best readers possible for performances at The School of Expression.

Finally, one source within the elocutionary movement, Hiram Corson, deserves special consideration. The lines of influence from Corson to Curry are tenuous at best. Curry neither studied under Corson nor did he know him personally. Nevertheless, the theory of delivery which Corson published in 1867 is too close to that of Curry to be ignored. While Curry did not borrow any specific practice or exercise from Corson, both men shared nearly identical points of view regarding the nature of delivery. Both men believed that delivery was basically a spontaneous process, both argued that technical training was nonetheless necessary, and both insisted that the imaginative faculty was the single most important mental process in good oral reading. Though it is possible that Curry

developed his own ideas in ignorance of Corson's tenets, the expressionist's thorough familiarity with the elocutionary movement makes this possibility unlikely.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As a late nineteenth-century teacher of speech S. S. Curry was heir to a tradition of elocution nearly 150 years old. But Curry viewed the results of that tradition as neither venerable nor valuable. Elocution, he believed, had isolated itself from the mainstream of human knowledge. According to Curry, though elocution or "right management of the voice" was of central importance to the education of the individual, elocutionists had ignored educational theory. Though elocution required the use of all man's languages, elocutionists had ignored philology. Though elocution was physical reaction to mental action, elocutionists had ignored psychology. Finally, though elocution was an art, elocutionists had ignored aesthetics. As a result of this ignorance, Curry insisted, elocutionary theory had become effete.

At the heart of Curry's own theory lay a determined, though perhaps occasionally unconscious, effort to reestablish the lines of influence between elocution and all its related disciplines.

Curry's examination of educational theory convinced him

that man as a product of nature should be educated according to the principles and laws laid down by nature herself. To Curry's mind the most significant educators, namely, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, all had turned to nature for the guidelines of their educational theories. As a result these educators urged that the whole man should be developed. More particularly, education should develop not only intellect but emotion; not only the power to absorb knowledge, but the power to express knowledge; and finally, not only the conscious volitional powers, but the unconscious spontaneous powers as well.

Curry also found in philology much that was relevant to the concerns of elocution. Since language was the basic tool of speaker, reader, and actor, Curry reasoned, elocution could ill afford to neglect the investigations of philologists. Though Curry was remiss in identifying the sources of his ideas on the nature of language, he did indicate a strong attraction to the philology of Wilhelm von Humboldt. From Humboldt, Curry borrowed a number of ideas. First, language was the product of national spirit, and therefore each separate language represented a separate spirit and demanded a unique mode of expression. Second, language was also the product of each individual who used that language. Thus, language, the tool or means of self-expression, would differ with each individual. Third, the only real language was spoken language. Language included not only arbitrary symbols or words but also voice and gesture.

Curry also reasoned that since delivery was a product of mental activity, elocution must adapt to the discoveries of psychology. For a description of the mind, Curry turned primarily to the discussions of Coleridge, Spencer, Bain, and Lotze. From the inquiries of these men, Curry concluded that mental activity consisted of a series of rhythmical pulsations made up of the conception of a single idea or image and a leap of the mind to another single idea or image.

Furthermore, these psychologists convinced Curry that mental activity involved at least three inseparable faculties: intellect, emotion, and volition. The faculty of intellect converted the perceptions supplied by the senses into images and ideas. The faculty of volition resisted the pull of the stream of consciousness, holding an individual image before the intellect until the faculty of emotion produced a "feeling" reaction to that image.

Finally, the psychologists convinced Curry that the physical act of delivery was the spontaneous reaction of the body to this mental activity of intellect, volition, and emotion. Delivery, therefore, was beyond the control of volition, was almost entirely dependent upon the vigorous unified activity of all the faculties.

Since elocution was an art and not a science, Curry believed, it should be especially sensitive to the discoveries of aestheticians. Curry himself was particularly attracted to the

theories of art propounded by the expressive aestheticians. Though he frequently acknowledged a significant debt to Hegel, Coleridge, and Ruskin, he also referred to the ideas of a host of other aestheticians in the expressive movement.

From these aestheticians Curry derived the following ideas: (1) Among the several elements which constituted an aesthetic experience, the artist was most important. Art, therefore, could be defined as the expression of the personality or character of the artist. (2) The audience was unimportant save that it might inspire the artist in his process of creativity. (3) The process of creation in art was the same process by which nature created all forms of life. (4) Imagination was the faculty which created all art. In the cases of the poet and the public speaker imagination would convert the objective facts of the natural world into the unified subjective experiences which constituted art. In the case of the reader imagination would convert the experiences within the poem into the experiences of the reader.

But Curry also believed that all art demanded a certain technical skill on the part of the artist. Elocution, he believed, was no exception to this rule. Furthermore, Curry insisted, each separate art form, were it painting, poetry, music, sculpture, or elocution, required its own particular body of technical skills. For this reason he turned to the elocutionary movement for ideas on the development of technique in voice

and body. While Curry rejected the belief that technique alone would result in art, he felt that a few elocutionists, particularly L. B. Monroe, Melville Bell, and Steele MacKaye, had presented to the world valuable methods for developing technique for the speaker, the reader, and the actor. Curry, therefore, modified his belief that delivery was spontaneous and involuntary. To make the voice and body responsive to the mind, he admitted, the student of elocution must eliminate abnormalities and bad habits of delivery. Thus, for purposes of training only, the student should concentrate upon specific actions of the voice and body, just as the painter would concentrate upon specific actions involved in painting. Once the techniques were mastered, once the voice and body were made directly responsive to the mind, the student of elocution, like the student of painting, would no longer concentrate on technique. Technique, Curry insisted, should be developed until it became spontaneous and unconscious.

Upon these ideas derived from education, philology, psychology, aesthetics, and elocution Curry based his own theory of elocution. But Curry believed that the theory which resulted from these influences differed markedly from anything then existing in elocution. His own theory, he argued, constituted more than a reform of elocution; it represented a rejection of elocution. Consequently, in his first textbook Curry abandoned the term "elocution" entirely, substituting in its place the

appellation, "expression."

Oral expression, Curry believed, was the revelation of the speaker's or reader's personality. Hence, expression was the product or "effect" of a man's total mental activity or "cause" converted into objective physical language or "means."

To develop expression, therefore, one must first concentrate upon the "cause" of expression, or mental activity. Consequently, much of Curry's method of teaching expression was given over to "psychic" or mental exercises. Curry designed these exercises to develop the reader's and speaker's abilities to conceive vividly individual ideas, to receive emotional stimulation from those ideas, to grasp the relationship which binds a number of ideas together into an organic unity, and in the case of the reader to assimilate the point of view of the poet into his own personality.

Curry presented these "psychic" exercises in two sets or groups. The first group developed the faculties of intellect, volition, and emotion, and was adapted to the descriptions of these faculties by psychologists of Curry's day.

The second group of exercises developed the faculty of imagination. Curry felt that psychology had failed to appreciate the faculty of the imagination. Consequently, this set of exercises was based largely upon expressive aesthetics. Only by imagination, Curry insisted, could the reader assimilate the experience represented in the poem or story into his own

personality.

Though Curry devoted much of his theory of expression to mental activity or "cause," he also discussed the "means" of expression or language. More precisely, he described three different languages of expression: the language of words, the language of voice, and the language of pantomime. Although Curry insisted that these languages operated as a direct and involuntary response to mental action, he also believed that these languages through misuse could become unresponsive to the actions of the mind. Consequently, he prescribed a series of "technical" exercises which were designed to return both voice and body to their natural responsiveness to mental activity. Curry's procedure here was to isolate each element of the vocal and bodily languages, to exercise that element in its natural, normal function, and finally, like Richard Whately "studiously to withdraw" the attention from the languages of expression.

Curry's theory of oral expression is liable to a number of valid criticisms. In the first place, the theory fails to recognize to any significant degree distinctions among the concerns of speaker, reader, and actor. Too often Curry's theory concentrates upon the concerns of the oral reader alone. Perhaps the most striking single example of this fault is the absence in this theory of any recognition that a speaker, because he struggles to realize his own ideas, faces a task quite different from that of the oral reader who seeks to realize the ideas of

another. Furthermore, one searches through Curry's theory in vain to find any distinction between the reader's relation to his text and the actor's relation to his script.

Second, Curry's habit of reducing his subject matter to a duality of polar opposites¹ frequently forced him to explicate and defend distinctions that are not only confusing but often untenable. His discussion of the languages of expression, for example, gains little from the distinction between "signs" and "symbols" to which Curry so tenaciously clung. Also, Curry's labored efforts to distinguish between "manifestation" and "representation" and his specific applications of this distinction are more often confusing than enlightening.

Third, twentieth-century scholarship has failed to validate many of Curry's observations on the development of technical skill in delivery. No contemporary textbook, for instance, contends, as did Curry, that vocal skill derives from the inhalation of breath in response to mental impression and the simultaneous relaxation of all parts of the tone passage. Furthermore, modern theorists have completely rejected Curry's Delsartian method for developing body.

Despite these weaknesses Curry's theory of expression represents a significant contribution to speech education on a number of counts. Perhaps Curry's single most important

¹This investigator has found some forty-two such dualities in Curry's theory.

contribution was his ability to find in other disciplines materials relevant to the concerns of speech. This is not to say that Curry was the only or even the first nineteenth-century speech theorist to borrow concepts from other disciplines, but certainly, no other nineteenth-century figure introduced into speech theory ideas from so many different fields.

More particularly, Curry brought to oral interpretation theory a more sophisticated understanding of aesthetics than any of his predecessors in the nineteenth century. In addition, Curry's treatment of imagination represents one of the first attempts in oral interpretation to equip the reader with the critical tools necessary for the full realization of the text.

Though twentieth-century interpretation theory has abandoned both Curry's reliance on expressive aesthetics and his emphasis upon imagination, it still operates within a matrix of aesthetic theory and it continues to insist that oral reading must begin with a close critical analysis of the text. For both these characteristics modern interpretation theory owes a considerable debt to S. S. Curry's theory of oral expression.

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Approved:

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